The New Criterion

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

The Popes' art *by Creighton Gilbert,* 1

The pride and prejudice of Fernand Braudel *by David Gress,* 7

Proust before 'A la recherche': letters *introductions by J. M. Cocking,* 14

'I am alone': Le Corbusier's sketchbooks *by William H. Jordy,* 41

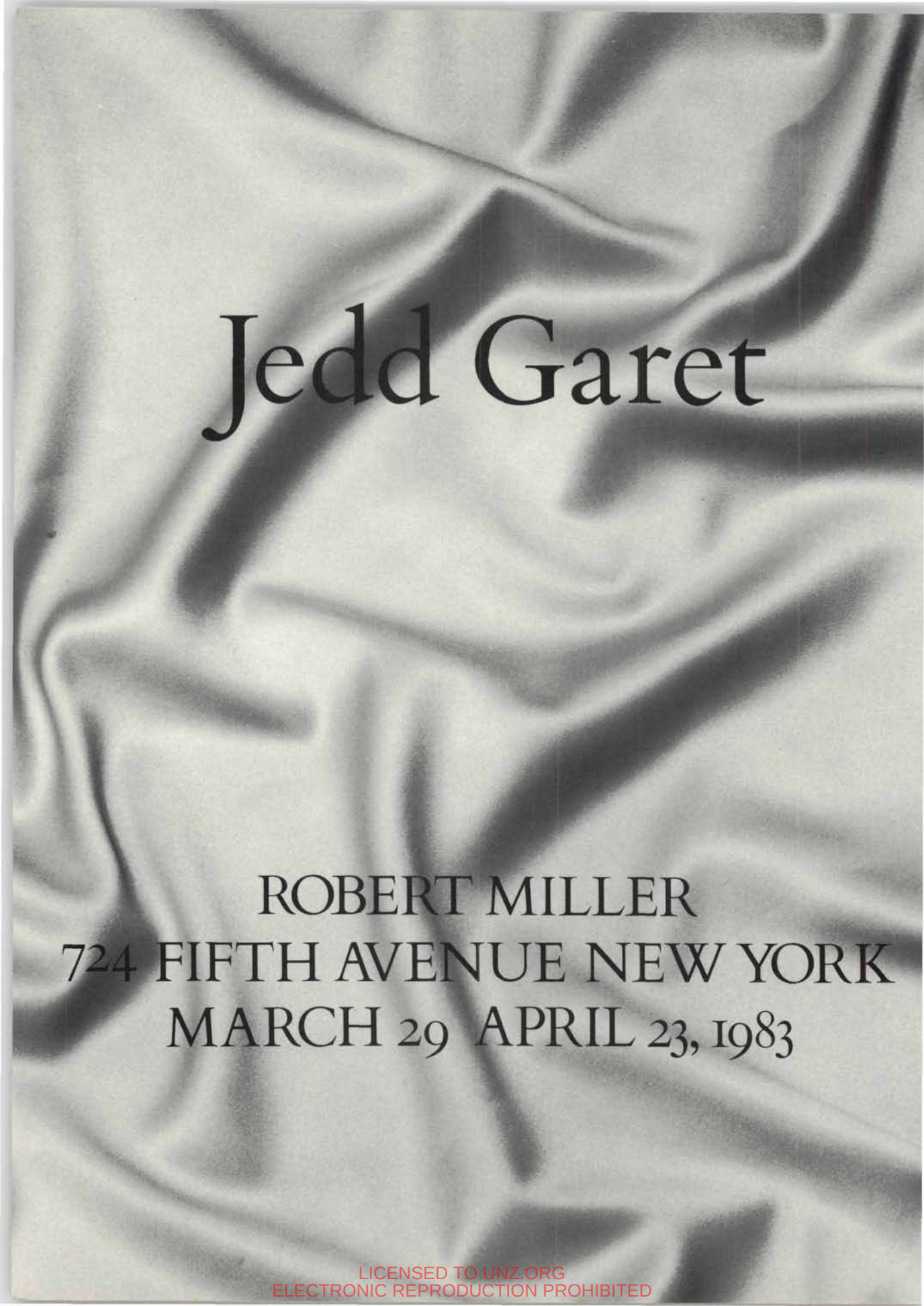
Art: The Morton Schamberg retrospective *by Hilton Kramer,* 50; **Theater:** Hamlet undone *by Mimi Kramer,* 55; **Music:** Opera in Germany *by Patrick Smith,* 64

Books: *Robert S. Liebert, M.D.* Michelangelo: a psychoanalytic study of his life and images *reviewed by Charles Dempsey,* 72; *Goethe* Italian journey 1786-1788 *reviewed by Vernon Young,* 76; **Fiction chronicle** *by Joshua Gilder,* 83; **Notebook:** Room on the podium? *by Samuel Lipman,* 89

Volume 1, Number 8 *April* 1983

$3.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Georg Baselitz

Paintings

March 31 - May 7

Willem de Kooning

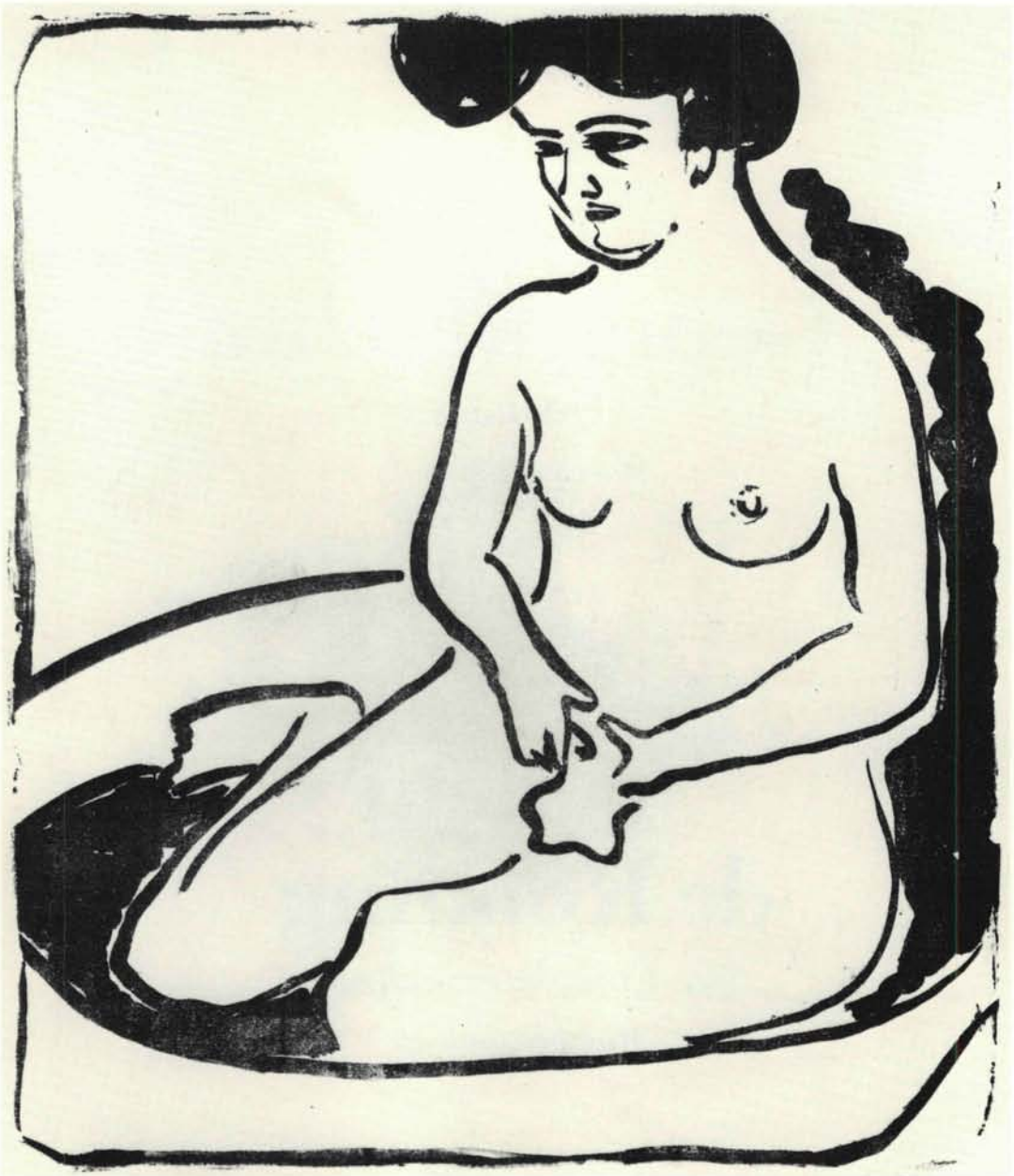
The Complete Sculpture

May 14 - June 25

XAVIER FOURCADE INC.

36 East 75 Street New York, NY 10021 212 535-3980

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Bathing Woman, 1909, lithograph, 23 x 30 inches.

E.L. Kirchner

paintings and works on paper

APRIL 5-30

Illustrated catalogue available at $7 ppd.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery

724 Fifth Avenue New York 10019

TELEPHONE: 212/247-2111

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The New Criterion *April 1983*

Editor *Hilton Kramer*

Publisher *Samuel Lipman*

Managing Editor *Erich Eichman*

Assistant Managing Editor *Jeanne Wacker*

Business Manager *Robert Richman*

Technical Editor *Eva Szent-Miklosy*

Contributors to this issue

J. M. Cocking is professor emeritus of French at King's College, London. He is the author of *Marcel Proust* and of *Collected Essays on the Writer and His Art.* The letters and introductions in this issue have been adapted from *Marcel Proust: Selected Letters 1880-1903,* to be published by Doubleday in June.

Charles Dempsey is professor of Italian Renaissance and Baroque art at Johns Hopkins University.

Creighton Gilbert is professor of the history of art at Yale University. His most recent book is the volume *Italian Art 1400-1500* in the series Sources and Documents in the History of Art, published by Prentice-Hall.

Joshua Gilder's most recent Fiction Chronicle appeared in the February issue of *The New Criterion.*

David Gress, a Danish-American historian, is a National Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He has contributed to *Commentary, Encounter,* and *The Public Interest.*

William H. Jordy is professor of art history at Brown University. His article, "The 'Little House' at the Metropolitan," appeared in the January issue of *The New Criterion.*

Mimi Kramer is a freelance writer living in New York.

Samuel Lipman is the music critic for *Commentary* and author of *Music after Modernism.*

Patrick J. Smith is the New York music critic for the London *Times.* His book, *A Year at the Met,* will be published by Knopf later this year.

Vernon Young's review of John Haffenden's *The Life of John Berryman* appeared in the January issue of *The New Criterion.*

The New Criterion is published monthly except July and August by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc., 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Publication Number ISSN 0734-0222. April, 1983, Volume I, Number 8. Subscription rates: $27 for one year, $50 for two. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send changes of address to 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019.

Copyright © 1983 by The Foundation for Cultural Review.

Distributed in England by Periodicals in Particular, 1 Prince of Wales Passage, 117 Hampstead Road, London, NW1. Editorial/business correspondence should be addressed to The New Criterion, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. (212) 247-6980.

The New Criterion is designed by Alvin and James Eisenman and printed by the Eastern Press of New Haven, Connecticut.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bryan Hunt

New Sculpture

BlumHelman

20 West 57, New York
30 March - 30 April

112 Greene, New York
2 April - 14 May

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Popes' art, out on loan

by Creighton Gilbert

Until June 12, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is showing the latest in a grand series of exhibitions organized under the aegis of national governments on other continents. "The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art"[1] follows exhibitions from Nigeria, Korea, Ireland, and other countries. Most of the objects in all of these shows have never moved so far before, and people tend to imagine they have not moved at all for centuries, though in actuality the last move was often when their home museums last had their installations redesigned. Some are objects charged with the strongest local symbolic values. Grand exhibitions of the arts of distant countries are not new, of course—one might cite the exhibition of Italian art mounted in London in 1930 and the one of Persian art there a few years later—and they have always required government participation. In earlier periods, however, such exhibitions customarily drew upon a variety of sources. The reasons for the shift to the present pattern are fairly obvious. Such enterprises now involve far more problems, produced by the unwillingness of museums to lend works of art of the greatest rarity and the great cost of their doing so. Moreover, unlike professional museum staffs, government officials often really *like* to send such works of art abroad. Not only do we recognize high culture, they can say, but we back it. Less controversial than most propaganda efforts, the message is delivered to the guest country and to the art constituencies of the country that is lending. It may even provoke rebuttal from opposition parties. The resulting complacency within the government is easily worth the costs. Thus in the United States the much enhanced value of culture to politics since World War II has established cultural attachés at our embassies, American libraries abroad, the national endowments for the arts and the humanities (whose beneficiaries, in all sincerity, tend to forget that the endowments were innovations of the wicked Lyndon Johnson and the even more wicked Richard Nixon), and—most directly to the present purpose—the law providing federal backing for the insurance of exhibitions, a looming item in their budgets. As a consequence of these changes and the attitude they reflect, an international exhibition is now easier to set up than are others, however complex it may still be to carry out.

Calling attention to such underpinnings is not new. But it may be less common to question the usual reason for doing so. When exposed, the impure, compromising motives involved appear to disgrace the museum, and the writer who thus looks behind the scenes appears to be calling them back to honorable behavior. But once articulated, this formulation itself becomes dubious. Partial

1 The exhibition will remain at the Metropolitan Museum through June 12. It will travel to Chicago (July 23 to October 16) and to San Francisco (November 19 to February 19, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crassness, after all, inheres in anything sublunar—including the motives of such writers; it inhered in the making of the exhibited works of art, works which we are now supposed to appreciate in an antiseptic way. Leonardo and Bernini, whose magic and mastery are made so specially accessible in the Vatican exhibition, did not live on "genius" fellowships but were paid to advertise, respectively, a bastard ducal dynasty and Counter-reformation church doctrines, tasks they performed with enthusiasm because they shared their governments' ways of thinking. Looking at works of art, to which purity is indeed relevant, one might easily slip into a form of reasoning perhaps most commonly exhibited by those who set out to praise Marxism and condemn capitalism—or the opposite—by citing the Platonic ideal of the one and the empirical working-out of the other. In the case of an exhibition such as this, I find it cheerful first to note the mixed motives behind it and then, not without savoring the irony, to take advantage of the fact that these big social forces have catered so luxuriously to us, offering us the pleasures of royalty, wiping out the usual inconveniences or impossibilities of long journeys and big blocks of time.

Arriving at this view is, to be sure, not made easier by some of the statements coming from the museum and from the exhibition's own wall panels and catalogue,[2] which can seem to validate such moral complaints. Consider the museum's response to the fact that the sale of tickets was slow: only one-third of the 596,000 tickets available were sold in three months' time. (In the only previous cases where tickets to New York exhibitions had been sold through Ticketron, Tutankhamen sold out in five days and Picasso sold out in three and a half months.) The museum decided to advertise on buses and subways. It is understandable that a public affairs officer at the museum should feel, according to *The New York Times,* "a degree of concern." But the question from a purist position might be, Why should it matter that the number of people wishing to look and pay is 150,000 or indeed *any* given number? There are some obvious reasons why Tut and Picasso drew more and the Apollo Belvedere less, including the fact that both of the former are such celebrities that they permeate a good part of lowbrow culture. So one is pleased to read that the museum's director is, by contrast, "not concerned at all," until, as he goes on, one learns that he is confident that sales will pick up.

So he does seem to have worried, and understandably so, for however much the museum officials share primarily aesthetic goals, in presenting the proposal to their board and the subsidizing corporations they at one time had to estimate numbers, and now they are in the unenviable position of a corporate executive whose board learns that his new product has sold much less well than he predicted. Then too, the audience ultimately of interest to museum people—that is, other museum people—will have scored a point in the "competition among museums for shows" rightly noted by Michael Brenson in a recent piece in *The New York Times* (January 16, 1983).

If such a stance can only make debunking types feel vindicated, comments by the lenders (apparently) can also do so, at the opposite extreme, by making implausibly high claims for the morality of patrons. An early wall panel, explaining the great size of the collection, reports that "the concern of the popes for the survival of culture and the arts, seen as expressions of man's highest spiritual aspirations, is almost as old as Christianity itself." I do not believe that concern for the survival of the arts is even a part of the reason why we have the works shown near the panel or any of those linked to the first millennium of the papacy, and I doubt that anyone else does. These works, like sermons, were meant to teach the public of the time what it was desired they should learn and to underline the role of the popes in relation to everyone else, and they are

2 *The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art,* edited by John O'Neill. The Metropolitan Museum and Harry Abrams, 256 pages, $24.95 hardcover, $14.95 paper.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

none the worse for that. But such claims really do pinpoint at least one of the reasons why we have colonial Williamsburg and the big bronzes on plazas in front of corporate skyscrapers: they express the view of patrons in a culture where art has lost nearly all its socially agreed upon reasons for being made and bought and has become an object of concern for protectors of endangered species.

A later wall panel explains that Pope Julius II tore down old St. Peter's because it had "become overcrowded and needed repair." Thus Bramante began the new St. Peter's, whose plan was modified during construction to a Latin cross "better suited to liturgical practice." Indeed it is better suited; but we are informed only of this latter benign and reasonable choice. We are not told why the less well suited plan had first been given the go-ahead. One frequently mentioned explanation is that both the plan and the destruction of the old church reflect Julius II's megalomania and could be carried out only because of the Pope's absolute powers in his domain, powers common at the time but today found in hardly any state but one.

In the eighteenth century, another wall panel reports, the "focus of papal patronage shifted from the commissioning of great artistic ensembles to the sponsorship of historical studies and formal collecting . . . . the celebrated Pio-Clementino museum showed antiquities in a unique architectural setting." All of this is true and worth pointing out, for the design is a Neo-classic jewel. What is not mentioned here but is recorded in the catalogue in a subordinate clause is one of the costs: "Although in the process the chapel containing late fifteenth-century frescoes by Mantegna was sacrificed . . . ." The cost, in short, was the intentional annihilation of one of those "great artistic ensembles" of earlier papal patronage, one of the three fresco cycles by Mantegna in the world. The reason for paying it is clear: as an "early Renaissance" work, it was, in terms of artistic progress, on an inferior level, one to which the recreation of classical Greece was preferred. The process was little different from that which produces the new storefronts that are our vernacular architecture's most emphatic token.

But it is not to be assumed that the frescoes would have been impossible to save. A few years earlier Masaccio's frescoes in Florence, on the brink of being knocked down by their owner, were kept for us through a publicity campaign in the name of "historical preservation" that enlisted the local duchess. It does sound familiar. To be sure, the claim was not that they were great art, but that Vasari, the immensely impressive authority on Florentine art history, had spoken of how a whole series of later artists up to Michelangelo had studied them. So they documented the artistic progress that interested the producers of the Pio-Clementino, instead of clashing with it.

Unfortunately, Rome had no Vasari, and Mantegna was an out-of-towner. What caps the irony is the fate of one of Mantegna's two fresco cycles to reach the twentieth century: it was destroyed by bombs in World War II. Unlike the former cycle, whose papal destruction was so thorough as to leave no trace, the latter has been memorialized on the site and elsewhere. The years of work devoted to re-assembling some shards (at the cost of resources withheld from projects that could have achieved more) plainly mark a political choice. It can be argued that the bombing was barbaric; yet it cannot be denied that it occurred only after the fascist government chose to join Hitler in war and triggered the invasion of Italy. I have seen this event described as "American bombing" but never as "antifascist bombing." If this Mantegna was one of countless works of art lost in that war, the other would seem to have been the only one ever sacrificed to build an art museum. Still, the historian is unwise to give marks to the past, even as he records its dynamics and notes the most bizarre of its ironies, which are of special value for understanding it. He is, however, supposed to give marks to other historians, not least when an image of benignity seems overstated.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The pattern impinges more nearly on the present when the benign aims that founded the Pio-Clementino are said to have included a halt to the export of antiquities, viewed by Pius VI with "mounting alarm." Efforts to keep works of art from being drawn far from their general locale—if not to honor their actual original settings—had indeed begun even earlier. But one should not be surprised that the effects of this force seem absent from the subsequent section of the show, which deals with preparations during the same papacy to create, with objects gathered by missionaries to Egypt and works imported when the Roman Empire had had Egypt as a colony, an Egyptian museum at the Vatican. When Gregory XVI did organize the museum—the "first in Europe" to specialize in Egyptian art—it was meant "to enhance the public's understanding of the Bible." Of course, the impulse to keep things from getting away and the impulse to bring things from afar are collecting constants, and perhaps it should be no more worrying when each is presented approvingly in isolation than it is puzzling when Britain today bars the export—as "national treasure"—of Italian paintings collected by eighteenth-century milords for their stately homes. It may well be that Pius VI was not making ethical claims in either case, but was consistent—each time merely taking the means available to maximize results for his side.

A still more modern paradox (unmentioned in the catalogue) dominates the part of the exhibition showing some twenty paintings on panel. They span the period, from about 1250 to about 1500, when this was the great medium for painters, and they include works by Fra Angelico, Leonardo, and Raphael. Today, museums—including the Metropolitan—have a virtually automatic policy not to lend panels, citing the risk to their preservation of humidity changes, jarring, and other forces. Yet there seems to be no rule against borrowing them, for this is not the first such occasion: recall only the Cimabue cross (of all fragile panels) and the *Mona Lisa* (of all irreplaceable ones). But I do not for a moment imagine that the Metropolitan staff failed in the case of this paradox to think about the issue. The implication has to be that the automatic policy is dubious. It may well be in part a crutch for the simple wish not to lend and to give what looks like an irrefutable reason. The matter might benefit from airing. Then it might be observed that actual cases of major harm—theft, vandalism, etc.—seem always to affect works in their home locations, from the *Mona Lisa* on. The works may even suffer more at home than abroad, even in proportion to the time spent, given that within their museums the moving about of panels is really fairly frequent and rather casual (a matter often not factored in), that in long-distance moving they spend most of the time in one place, and that borrowing museums tend to have better humidity control and security. Perhaps the rule is still a good one, but it does seem to have been oversimplified.

Panel paintings, Egyptian art, classical antiquities—the show does not after all sound very similar to "The Art of Ireland" or "The Art of Nigeria," but more like the other type of blockbuster show exemplified most recently by the exhibition of treasures from the great museum in Dresden. Indeed, the Vatican is not only the smallest state on earth but the only one virtually co-extensive with an art museum, at least in some eyes. This exhibition does straddle the two types. In the essay already cited, Michael Brenson suggests that because in America there is "no sacred stone," we have thought that "the past is not a river from which everything flows," as it is in Europe, "but a giant supermarket." The distinction is a good one, but not the correlation with geography. Mr. Brenson admits as much when, going into more detail, he tells us how, living in Paris, he could easily get to Vermeer in The Hague, Grünewald in Colmar, and Piero in San Sepolcro, thereby conceding silently that he could not get to such sacred stones in Paris, but only in backwaters, as he also could in Charleston, S.C.

The Vatican certainly has such stones aplenty, and in the Cosmati panels or the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tomb of Boniface VIII (who died after a botched assassination attempt by his political rival, the King of France) we can literally see them in this exhibition. But the Vatican is also the grandest of all supermarkets, where, even more than in the British Museum, bite-sized packages of other people's cultures have arrived from medieval England or Aztec Mexico. This aspect of the Vatican certainly includes the papal adoption, in the High Renaissance, of the style of pagan Rome at a time when papal taste was so significant that it could become the chic of Europe and so mask the absence of riverine continuity. As a museum it differs from the other great eclectic museums such as the Louvre or Berlin (in contrast to the non-eclectic, local-flow ones such as the Uffizi or Topkapi) in that all the others reflect in the dominant share of their collections the age since the French Revolution, while the Vatican does so in very little. The popes, that is, invented the supermarket museum (or reinvented it, after antiquity). They did not, as the catalogue says, begin this in the eighteenth century, but in the fifteenth, when they put on display a set of pagan art objects that were still together in Rome but outside the Vatican. That the exhibition should ignore and even deny this is a token of the major role played in it by the administrative statehood of the Vatican and its influence on thought.

The visitor's progress through the exhibition does not follow the order in which the objects were executed, as is customary, but that in which they were collected. Thus the works Bernini made for the popes precede Fra Angelico's, which were expropriated by a later pope. (Nothing immoral here, since the works were taken from a previous expropriator, Napoleon, who had acquired them as booty from a church in an Italian town. The idea of returning them to their original context was not considered.) The subtitle of the show, "The Papacy and Art," is therefore precise; and the great display really has a rather scholarly point, namely the history of papal concerns and taste. The installation exploits the theme brilliantly. At home, these objects among thousands can never be seen in a linear way, shoved edgewise as they often are into whatever annexes of annexes have been built. Here, the two hundred and thirty-seven selected "gems" have plenty of space (to accommodate those expected crowds) and admirably planned lighting and wall coloring. The rooms snake through the building in a square "s" and the resulting rapid shifts from culture to culture, each with its few uplifted objects, are better at making visitors forget museum fatigue than any device planned for that purpose would have been. The result justifies the bureaucratic requirement that each Vatican sub-museum get its own spot. The same bureaucratic process meant (as is often true in Italy with loan exhibitions) that funds would be allocated for cleaning that might otherwise have been unavailable.

Of the works so treated, the great hit is evidently the Caravaggio *Entombment.* This is the first time that we in America have seen this artist, the paradigmatic model for a major part of modern taste, through one of his grander works. It seems not to have its original color relationships, however, the background shadow pigments having darkened disproportionately over time. The nineteenth century would have chosen to resolve this by toning down the foreground too, with varnish. I think we do better to leave the bold foreground forms and all else that genuinely remains.

The Apollo Belvedere, of all unlikely monuments, seems to be the pivot of the show and to be winning the kind of admiration last given it in the age of Canova and Mengs. (Since then it has been either objected to, made fun of, or ignored.) How can we again be inspired by this admitted academic copy of a much earlier image showing an impossible standard of what males would like their bodies to be, as movie photography shows a similarly impossible standard for females? To be sure, the figure has been given a pivotal installation and a very good job of conservation. But this is evidently more an early result than the cause of our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

admiration. A dozen years ago, it would have been Camp. Now, it seems that such works are merely using Camp as a base to have further triumphs approved without any irony.

Perhaps it was natural that excitement about the Apollo Belvedere should follow the chic of the Academic nineteenth century and the varied rejections—by Pearlstein, Close, Hockney—of the avant-garde's confidence of moving with history (though such rejections may in a future history of taste seem not so varied). The episode may have its absurd side, but it certainly represents a widening of the eyes. And that satisfying result needed, in turn, the mixed motives behind the decision to move such sculpture across an ocean and a continent for some months. Certainly the complaint made by the left-wing art establishment in Italy—that scholars visiting the Vatican are being "defrauded" of their chance to see these works—should be assigned no purer motives. The works could be seen there any time through 1982 and can be seen again after 1983; to insist on 1983 as well, at the expense of scholars elsewhere, seems at least a claim of self-indulgent privilege. If there are scholars who hadn't thought of or hadn't got around to making the visit until reminded by this event, it is the more justified. This is no less true despite the extraordinary circumstance that, in principle, an entirely different two-hundred-and-thirty-seven-object loan could have been made up, using analogues in kind and quality, from the same collections.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The pride and prejudice of Fernand Braudel

by David Gress

"If the Nobel Prize were given to historians, it would almost certainly have been awarded to Fernand Braudel." Thus begins a recent article by a prominent American historian, Samuel Kinser, on the "Braudel phenomenon," the methods, principles, and above all the claims made on behalf of the work of Fernand Braudel (born 1902), the French historian commonly viewed today as the grand master of twentieth-century historiography.[1] Another, more moderate admirer, J. H. Hexter, wrote in 1972 in an issue of the *Journal of Modern History* dedicated exclusively to Braudel and his influence that he and his followers were "the most productive and lively school of historians practicing their art today," while in 1975 Braudel and his work received the supreme accolade of the ruling cultural forces of the Anglo-Saxon world when the *New York Times* called his twelve-hundred-page book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* "the most significant work of history of our time." And, most recently, the well-known British historian, J. H. Plumb, reviewing Braudel's recent *Structures of Everyday Life,* repeated Kinser's speculation about the Nobel Prize, adding praise of "the vigor, the éclat, the immense sense of gusto which permeates his style" and asserting that "Braudel writes an incomparable French . . . the vehicle for works planned and executed on a gigantic scale . . . . His themes rival Gibbon's." Plumb concludes that *Structures* is "a book of great originality, a masterpiece."[2]

These are strong claims indeed. To believe the scholars I have quoted (and more could easily be adduced), Fernand Braudel, native of Lorraine, lycée teacher in Algiers in the Thirties, POW in Mainz during World War II (where much of the text of *The Mediterranean* was written), and president during 1956-72 of the VI Section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris,[3] is the uncrowned king of history of our time. He dares to grapple with great themes, his methods are revolutionary as well as revela-

1 "*Annaliste* Paradigm? The Geohistorical Structuralism of Fernand Braudel," in the *American Historical Review,* 86 (1981).

2 Both works are published in the United States by Harper & Row, the French originals by Armand Colin, Paris: *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II,* first edition 1949, extensively rewritten for the second edition, 1966, now in an (unchanged) third edition, 1976; *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XV^e-XVIII^e siècles,* three volumes, 1979, of which *Structures,* which was originally published without notes in 1967, is the first. The issue of the *Journal of Modern History* devoted to Braudel is no. 4, Fall 1972.

3 A college of advanced studies at university or post-graduate level. The VI Section was subsequently made independent as the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales; its current president is the noted Tocquevillian scholar François Furet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory, and his style is "incomparable." I should emphasize that it is almost unheard of for professional historians, especially British or American historians, to lavish such superlatives on a colleague (except when he is retiring). Whatever the intrinsic merits of Braudel's work—and I shall come to those as well—we are clearly dealing here with an approach, a method, a temperament that has found extraordinary favor with many of the prominent practitioners of historical research and writing today.

Why this should be so must remain to some extent a matter of speculation. Reviewers and critics have usually contented themselves with the sort of praise I have quoted, sometimes combined with extensive analysis, but have rarely, if ever, tried to explain just what it is that appeals to them, or why they think that the questions Braudel poses are the true questions of history. This is all the more odd given the fact that of all of Braudel's many admirers in the Anglo-Saxon world few, if any, have tried to copy his methods. This in turn raises another issue: is Braudel's work essentially unique and unrepeatable, or is it really the vanguard of the kind of history that we should be writing if we could?

I hope to show that Braudel's work is, indeed, one of a kind, that the claims made on its behalf are inconsistent, that, despite its undeniable great and lasting qualities, it fails both in its own terms and as a kind of history supposedly more adequate and more complete than the traditional history of ideas, institutions, and conflicts, and, finally, that the picture it presents of human reality and existence is seriously flawed and abbreviated. Braudel's problems, while interesting, are not the real problems, and his approach is totally unsuited to solving, or even asking, the kinds of questions we need to be able to ask if history is to have any role at all in helping us understand and deal with the great issues of this or any other age.

What are, first of all, the intellectual origins and characteristics of Braudel's work? He himself claims that the general pattern of the earlier and most famous of his two great works, *The Mediterranean,* was complete by 1936, and that the second, *Structures of Everyday Life,* was essentially conceived in the early Fifties, though the gathering and sifting of facts for inclusion continued to the late Seventies. The former was originally conceived as a straightforward *thèse de doctorat* on some aspects of Spanish policy in the 1580s, but, while working on it, Braudel became impatient with diplomatic history, "shuttered up in its chosen area," as he puts it, and felt drawn rather to "real life, fertile and promising." This idea of a "real life" richer and more satisfying than the life found in the annals of war, diplomacy, and religious strife recurs again and again in Braudel's writings, combined with an equally fervent insistence on the primacy and indeed superiority of social and economic facts and a denial of the significance of politics and culture. It never seems to have occurred to him that this notion of "real life" is problematic or that there might be a contradiction between his espousal of a "total history," a "history without limits" (*histoire sans frontières*), and his refusal to include political, institutional, and religious developments in his scheme.

This is ironic, because Braudel's mentor, a man he always refers to even today with respect and affection, was Lucien Febvre (1875-1956), a fellow Lorrainer and founder, along with the Jewish historian Marc Bloch (1888-1944, executed by the Germans as a hostage), of the journal *Annales* and, by extension, of the so-called "*Annales* school," with which Braudel's name is invariably associated. Febvre's most famous work is a book, first published in 1919, entitled *Le Problème de l'incroyance,* a study, as the title indicates, of religious belief in the sixteenth century, with Rabelais as its central focus. Febvre, indeed, does what Braudel has never done: he integrates the study and interpretation of past ideas, sentiments, and convictions with the study of changing social conditions and opportunities. Braudel has overshadowed his mentor, but Febvre's work and the inspiration behind it is far

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more fruitful, as the best recent work on ideas and social change shows (I shall mention some examples below).

Another source of inspiration for the young Braudel was the Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne. This is another irony, for Pirenne's most famous contribution to scholarship, the "Pirenne thesis," also hinges on a fact which is neither social nor geographical but religious: the rise of Islam. Pirenne argued that the economic and cultural unity of the Mediterranean basin established in the Roman period ended, not when the Roman Empire broke apart in the fifth and sixth centuries, but when the Moslem conquests of the late seventh and eighth centuries isolated the south and east from the north and west, closing off trade routes and stopping the flow of goods and exchange of ideas. The shift in the main axis of European culture from the Mediterranean to the Rhone-Rhine valleys, the establishment of a medieval empire based in northern France and western Germany, would not have happened but for the expansion of Islam. Since nothing in later medieval or modern European history can be understood unless one grasps the meaning and importance of the idea of the Christian Empire, this thesis, whether true or false, is certainly fascinating. Again, it is an idea of the sort that Braudel's approach ought to foster, but cannot, given its intrinsic disregard of religious, political, and other non-material factors.

The third, and in the end utterly decisive, source of inspiration for Braudel was the discovery of geography, specifically in the work of the "human geographer" Paul Vidal de la Blache, who was never a teacher of Braudel but who is quoted ceaselessly in *The Mediterranean.* Braudel derived from him the idea that what counts in history is the environment, the distances, the climate, the natural forces that determine the speed and ease of travel and exchange. This led in turn to the formulation of Braudel's basic and unshakable conviction: the idea that the basis of history is the operation of slow-moving, long-term forces, what he calls *la longue durée.* Individual actions, beliefs, and preferences have little or no influence and cannot change the dictates of structure. They occur on the level of events, which have been given too much attention by historians who have not understood that the form and results of the events themselves were shaped by that *personnage encombrant, la longue durée,* and the intermediate level of the "conjuncture." This tripartite scheme of structure, conjuncture, and event constitutes the essence of Braudel's contribution to historical interpretation.

One may be forgiven for not finding it particularly original. Its heuristic value is modest and is limited to the kinds of facts that Braudel selects: geographical, economic, and anthropological. Certainly if one is concerned with patterns of trade in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, with grain prices in Madrid or the time it took to travel from Alexandria to Venice, the importance of the natural environment is very great. Equally, if one is concerned with the pattern and form of material life, with public health, longevity, nutrition, and agricultural technology, the weight of the long term prevails. But as soon as one begins to apply the scheme to the human sphere, where politics, economics, and religious fervor interact, doubts occur. Or, rather, they should. In fact, in Braudel's case, they don't. He evades the problem. This is easy for him to do, since his definition of "total history" excludes politics and religion. Thus he can claim that his notion of history is wide and generous, partaking of "real life, fertile and promising," while leaving out huge areas of very real life indeed. When he occasionally does deal with events of what one might call human experience, rather than with the facts and conditions of material life, his tripartite scheme fails ludicrously, producing generalizations, assertions, and rhetorical claims that would be immediately rejected in any undergraduate paper. For example, in a recent piece[4] written to honor the man who

4 "The Rejection of the Reformation in France," in *History and Imagination,* ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones and others; Duckworth, 1981.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is Braudel's diametrical opposite, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Braudel purports to ask the question: why did the Reformation fail in France. He begins with the claim that the nature and development of religious belief obeys "simplifying rules" similar to the environmental and natural constraints that govern the sphere of material life. There follow some pages full of vague and unoriginal remarks, such as the observation that the Reformation did not begin on October 31, 1517, when Luther proclaimed his ninety-five theses on the doctrine of indulgences (no serious historian claims that it did). Having established that the French Reformation, and its failure, had deep causes, he finally, with considerable fanfare, makes the observation that the dividing line between Catholic and Protestant Europe, as it was finally established, closely followed the ancient Roman frontier (he does not mention Ireland, Poland, or Lithuania here, which would rather spoil the effect). "Perhaps we should invoke what might be called an extraordinary accumulation of history, remote-controlled from the distant past." The final "explanation" of the failure of the Reformation in France is simply "inertia and religious loyalties." Needless to say, this is an explanation that does not explain, a circular argument: France remained largely Catholic, therefore she was destined to remain largely Catholic. Evidently, when applied to the issues that really matter and change people's lives, Braudel's scheme is capable of only the most trivial and obvious results.

Looking closely, one finds that this is the case even in the areas of economic and social change, where the validity of Braudel's approach is taken for granted. *The Mediterranean,* in its final form, consists essentially of a large number of small essays on the geography, climate, trade patterns, populations, and economic practices of the Mediterranean basin. Most, but not all, of the evidence is from the sixteenth century. The ultimate conclusion of all this, however, is rather thin: it is merely that the sixteenth century was a time of relative economic stagnation in the Mediterranean, a time of increasing disparities between rich and poor, and also that the economic decline was very unevenly distributed. Thus Venice kept her prosperity longer than was formerly assumed, and the focal point of world trade did not move to Amsterdam and the north until around 1600. In general the changes wrought by the great discoveries and the revival of Moslem power in the Ottoman Empire were slow and gradual rather than rapid and sudden. Now, this is no sensational discovery and was indeed an argument that could easily have been made without the eight hundred or so pages of description provided by Braudel, pages that constitute the charm and chief attraction of the work. In fact, *The Mediterranean* does not offer any great new interpretations. There is no Braudellian counterpart to the "Pirenne thesis"; rather, what we have is a series of stories, of anecdotes, meditations, and traveler's tales about a great variety of peoples, places, and conditions in a vaguely determined period of history. As such, the book is sometimes fascinating, sometimes tedious, but it is not a work of history, and in no sense is it an example of the revolutionary application of a new interpretative scheme.

This becomes clear when one examines Braudel's "incomparable" style more closely. The Austrian historian Heinrich Lutz has suggested that Braudel uses three levels of expression: a "scientific" level, the level of the traveler's tale, and a level of "suggestive and mythically exalted language." I have already touched on the first two: on the first level, the "scientific" one, Braudel tries to quantify and generalize from economic data, with few decisive results; on the second level we have the great number of stories and anecdotes I have mentioned. The third level is the most interesting, because here Braudel's stylistic quirks and his belief that history is about nature and its impact on man in general, not about the hopes and struggles of individuals, comes out most clearly:

> The Mediterranean with its creative emptiness, the astonishing freedom of its waterways . . . its different, yet similar shores, its towns born

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> of the movement of men, its complementary peoples and inescapable hostility, is a task ever begun anew . . . . All civilizations are construction, difficulty, tension, but those of the Mediterranean have fought against a thousand sometimes tangible obstacles . . . against the enormous continental masses surrounding the Interior Sea . . . and even against the immensities of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.
>
> According to the plan and principles of my geographical observations, I have therefore sought the localizations, the permanences, the immobilities, the repetitions, the "regularities" of Mediterranean history.

He then recalls the literary image of the Mediterranean as it has been shaped by writers such as Durrell, Giono, or Carlo Levi, whose *Christ Stopped at Eboli* is an evocation of the harsh life of the barren and malaria-infested interior of southern Italy, as opposed to the *douceur de vivre* of the coastlands, as seen by the author, a northerner from Turin, exiled by decree of the fascist authorities for two years to the remote south. But this very example shows that what Braudel is doing is not really history at all. A historian, upon reading Levi's book, might find the contrast of coast and interior interesting, but would want to ask questions about its causes—not environmental and natural, but social, economic, and political. And what about the narrator, the exile from Turin? Why was he exiled? This in turn would lead to questions about the fascist regime and the Italian legal system, about the intellectual's relations to authority, and so forth. All evidently historical questions, but questions impossible to ask in Braudel's world, though he claims to be showing "real life, fertile and promising."

Braudel's "total history," then, is a very partial history. The facts chosen for inclusion are the external, the material facts: what the weather was like, how long it took to cross the Sahara desert or the Mediterranean, how much cotton passed through the ports of Leghorn or Marseilles, and so forth, or, in *Structures,* what people wore and ate, what their health was like, how they tilled the soil and mined for metals. In *Structures* more than in *The Mediterranean,* it is true, there is an attempt to get at how people saw the world, to describe what French historians, not all of them influenced by Braudel, have called the *outillage mental.* The reason that I do not consider this blend of anthropology, geography, and national economy a truly *historical* account of anything is that the issues that matter, the stuff of human anguish, conflict, and ambition, are entirely missing. One would not gather from reading *The Mediterranean* that the two predominant developments of the later sixteenth century in southern Europe, developments that were all-important for the formation of the modern world and modern beliefs, were the Counter-reformation and the rise of the modern state. The uneasy relations between religion and politics and the gradual replacement of the former by the latter as the means to human happiness and fulfillment is the great constant of Western history, yet it is wholly absent from Braudel's work. There are no signs that he even perceives this great problem as an issue. For him, there is either crude *histoire événementielle,* the chronicle of surface events, or there is his "total history," but no possible third level on which the study of geography, economy, and material life might be integrated with politics, religion, and diplomacy to provide a truly broad interpretation of past epochs. Several critics have noted that the final portion of *The Mediterranean,* which recounts the political and military events of 1550-1600, is by far the weakest, thin and pedestrian even by the standards Braudel despises. If this section is an example of what Braudel understands by old-fashioned diplomatic history, one can sympathize with his frustration. Wars, battles, and diplomatic maneuvers are discussed flatly, textbook style, with no overarching theme or reference to underlying ideas, trends, and dynastic or religious ambitions. Braudel's odd blindness to the higher dimensions of human existence ironically enough makes it impossible for him to see the true

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

potential of his own notion of "real life."

To show what can be done in the way of offering an historically relevant account of Braudel's original problem in *The Mediterranean,* namely the shift in prosperity from south to north, from Mediterranean to Atlantic, I would cite Trevor-Roper's famous essay "Religion, the Reformation and Social Change."[5] The problem is succinctly stated: "Why was the economic advance which, in the sixteenth century, seemed so general, and in which all Europe had its share, carried to completion only in certain areas?" Not because of some metaphysical affinity of Protestant northerners for capitalist expansion: "For us, who believe that Catholic Europe . . . was perfectly able to create a capitalist economy, the question is, why, in the sixteenth century, did so many of the essential agents of such an economy—not only entrepreneurs, but also workers—leave the old centres, predominantly in Catholic lands, and migrate to new centres, predominantly in Protestant lands?" The answer to this question of economic behavior is found, not surprisingly, in the area of politics and religion. The entrepreneurs and workers, says Trevor-Roper, "were driven out not merely by priests, on doctrinal grounds, though these supplied the pretext and the agency of expulsion, but—since the religion of State is a formulation of social ideology—by societies which had hardened against them." And this hardening was the fruit of the alliance of mutual interest between Counter-reformation and princely State, replacing the much looser secular and religious controls of the late Middle Ages. The new State and the new Church replaced freer means of personal enrichment and promotion:

> the new State entailed a new society and the new social forms gradually strengthened themselves by investing in themselves . . . thus the wealth and power of society would be directed into office and the Church would be the consecration not of a mercantile but of an official society.
>
> Thus the Counter-reformation State gradually created, even in the old mercantile cities which it conquered, a new kind of society. . . . In Venice, because it was not absorbed by or converted into a princely State, in Amsterdam, because it continued the republican society which had been suppressed in Antwerp, the old character was preserved.

Here we have, then, an explanation of economic and social change in early modern Europe that is both interesting and relevant. By contrast, Braudel offers only the observation that the Mediterranean basin (with the exception of Venice) stagnated economically around 1600, which is repeated again and again amidst a flood of disparate facts, anecdotes, and meditations like the one quoted briefly above. Despite the claims and the much touted tripartite scheme of immobile long-term structure, intermediate-term conjuncture, and concrete event, there is no integration—as there could be—of this economic, geographical, and anthropological substratum with the political and religious developments that, in their own concrete events and long-term structures, are the real stuff of history.

The poverty of Braudel's scheme, which is more a function of his own personal predilections and blindnesses than of its own inherent flaws, is abundantly evident when we try to imagine how he would deal with the great issues of contemporary history: ideological conflict, the stability and durability of democratic regimes, totalitarianism, and nationalism. In fact, he could not deal with them at all. The question, for example, of how the Cold War began, so crucial to a proper and responsible interpretation of the current scene, cannot even be asked, much less answered, in Braudel's terms. He might be able to provide us with a great deal of undigested detail about the patterns of world trade and economic development, but if anything is clear from the history of the last few decades it is that politics still dom-

5 Easily available in *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays,* Harper Torchbook, 1969.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inate economics and that a purely economic understanding of international relations is not only seriously flawed, it is useless (which is not to say that economic understanding is not important, of course). Braudel sets out to describe the typical behavior of various groups and classes in a given environmental and material context, and this is undoubtedly interesting, as far as it goes. But the decisions, the dreams, the ambitions, and the struggles of individuals and masses that set the terms of experience and action are utterly absent.

While I certainly do not agree with Braudel that the long term always defeats the event, I also think that it might very well be possible to test this doctrine in what I have called the properly historical field. The problem is that Braudel never does so (except sporadically, as in the ridiculous essay on the French Reformation I quoted from above). Why not? It is always hard, of course, to discuss the unstated suppositions of others, although in Braudel's case we have a number of clear pointers. The very fact that he considers "total history" to be the study of regularities, repetitions, and permanences in the natural and social environment is significant, or that, in a recent article[6] he considers "problem no. 1" of European history to be the "problem of the catastrophic collapse of 1350-1450," the century of the Black Death, deteriorating climate, hunger, and war. He sees the latter problem exclusively in terms of trade, exchange, and economic activity, and ignores the fact that this period also marked the flowering of the Italian Renaissance, the beginnings of modern political thought, and the religious and intellectual ferment that was the direct forerunner of the Reformation. His complaint that political and cultural histories are weak and thin is especially absurd here, when one considers the range of studies and interpretations of the beginnings of modernity in Europe that are truly "total history," from Hans Baron's *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (first published 1955) to such recent works as Stephen Ozment's *The Age of Reform 1250-1550* (1980). The question of the concrete foundations of the technical outlook, the regularization of existence by calculation and planning, and the rise of the idea of social mobility as resulting from individual effort rather than from the quirks of fate have recently been exhaustively examined by Alexander Murray in *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), a book which appeals to Braudel and the *Annales* school but which in form and execution is far closer to Bloch and Febvre than to their peculiar pupil, Fernand Braudel.

In the end, then, Braudel and his work stand as huge self-contradictions. Proclaimed as "total history," as an exploration of "real life, fertile and promising," the work offers a wealth of facts and speculation, but with a curious slant. "Real life," for Braudel, is only half of life; only the life seen by the geographer, the anthropologist, the travel writer. When he says that the event is controlled by the long term, he would not mean, to choose an example from a different period, that the outcome of the Battle of Hastings was controlled by the superior strength and vigor of Norman-French culture and habits (a sustainable, if dubious, thesis), but rather that the kind of armor worn and the material habits and patterns of trade of the Normans and the Saxons were determined by the natural environment and broad social and economic conditions, which is an assertion that is either trivial and obvious or unprovable. But history is not about things or even about how things affect people or how people use things, but about passions, conflicts, and decisions that change the world. World War II changed the world, but would cause hardly a ripple in a future Braudellian account of the capitalist era. Whatever such an account might be, it would not be history.

6 The afterword to the *Histoire Economique et Sociale de la France,* pp. 1677-1693 of volume 4, part 3, Paris, PUF, 1982.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Proust before "A la recherche": selected letters, 1880-1903

edited by Philip Kolb and translated by Ralph Manheim introductions by J. M. Cocking

There was a time when Proust's biographers and critics were on the defensive about his letters, aware as they were of the unprepossessing image those letters might conjure up. Philip Kolb's work in editing and presenting them, pursued with hardly a break over nearly half a century, has changed all that and revealed the wealth and variety of interests to be found there.

Proust's letters began to be known to the reading public in the late 1920s and the 1930s; first, a few at a time, in the memoirs published by people he cultivated, or in periodicals; then, from 1930 onwards, in the old edition of the *Correspondance générale*. The first collected volume (1930), which revealed all the letters then known of Proust to Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac (Proust's model for the Baron de Charlus), did very little for Proust's reputation as a correspondent. As a one-sided view of the relationship, it was like incense burning for a god; and, thought Proust's more serious readers, a dubious god at that.

When the second volume of the *Correspondance générale* came out in the following year, the situation was not much improved in the eyes of Proust's critics: letters to another aristocrat, the Comtesse de Noailles —thus, unbounded flattery of another minor poet (second-rate rather than third, perhaps, but no great shakes). And little attention was paid to Proust's essay on Anna de Noailles's *Les Eblouissements,* printed in the same volume as the letters, since it seemed to follow the same sort of pattern as the letters themselves. The letters in the four remaining volumes, which appeared from 1932 to 1936—miscellaneous, often superficially socializing—did not reassure Proust's admirers; even his friendliest critics felt obliged to draw a distinction between the man and the writer, the personality and the genius.

This, of course, was a distinction more than suggested by Proust himself in his novel, in the passages dealing with the nature of literary vocation, and it was a theme he had worked out pretty thoroughly in an unpublished work, now in print as *Contre Sainte-Beuve*. He was bothered by what he judged to be his own moral shortcomings and anxious to keep the notion of art on a high spiritual level with the artist as a man of almost religious insight. Art, he reiterated, is life transformed, and the artist is separated from the man by the success of his metamorphosis. Style, he believed, is not a clever way of saying things but a quality of vision. He virtually gave his critics leave, therefore, to apologize for his letters and keep them well apart from his creative writing.

Philip Kolb was the first to see that Proust's letters were of more than trivial interest. As early as 1938 he spotted references to unknown writings that Proust was working at between 1895 and 1900, thought of then as the novelist's idle years; he was proved right in 1952, when the drafts of Proust's unpublished story of Jean Santeuil

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were revealed to the public. More important, Kolb set to work on the letters as they were then published—dated inaccurately or not at all, arranged in approximate and often improbable sequence—and played the ingenious detective. Through evidence converging from all angles—contemporary history, newspapers, weather reports, watermarks, and internal cross-references—he put some order and coherence into them, and the book he published in 1949 became a bible for biographers.[1] He also collected quantities of previously unknown letters for the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana: originals, photocopies, snippets in sales catalogues. The final outcome of all this is the definitive edition of the letters now being published by Librairie Plon, from the first three volumes of which these letters are drawn.

The sequential and exactly dated order of the letters in Philip Kolb's full edition helps the reader to follow Proust through his successive efforts to write a novel about Jean Santeuil between 1895 and 1900, to plan a better kind of novel after abandoning this first attempt but without making further headway; to please his mother by translating Ruskin even when enthusiasm waned and the devoted service of the disciple degenerated into rather grudging hackwork. The most exciting references to Proust's developing sense of vocation come in letters later than those included here. But in many ways these earlier letters reveal what Proust was later to call the "fundamental notes" of a personality, on which the subsequent music of a human sensibility is based.

—J. M. Cocking

I

The first letters in this part show Proust in his relations with one of his school friends, Robert Dreyfus, to whom he expounds a theory of character. In another letter he consults his much admired philosophy teacher Darlu—whose great influence over his thinking Proust was later to deplore—about his psychological problems, which he presents as a sort of Romantic *mal du siècle*; this amounts to reading his own experience in terms of literary patterns, which is typical of the way his mind is working at this stage in his development.

While still at school at the Lycée Condorcet, Proust wrote the first of the letters in which he attempted to draw close to the objects of his fascinated admiration by conveying an amalgam of concern and flattery; he offered his incense in this case to Anatole France. The letter shows clearly that France was, for the young Proust, exactly what Bergotte was to be for the young Marcel of the novel.

Proust was just eighteen when he left school with the first prize in French composition and the third place in his class. In that same summer, of 1889, there was a new law about military service. It reduced the term from five years to three but rescinded the option whereby (until then) young men who could equip themselves at their own expense and had a good secondary education could volunteer and escape with one year. Proust hastened to take up this option while it was still open.

In October 1893, after prolonged and at first very desultory attempts to study, Proust passed the exam for the *licence* in law, which precipitated the next great trial of his young life: the choice of a career. With as much ingenuity as determination Proust managed not to choose one. The outcome, in 1895, was a job at one of the national libraries—a job which turned out to be neither prestigious nor interesting. Proust escaped by claiming indefinite sick leave, and saved himself for his literary pursuits.

Meanwhile his social life was taking him outward and upward from the family circle. By 1893 he was adopted by Madeleine Lemaire, who, when she was not painting roses, kept a salon in which Proust took note of behavior that was to enter into his imagining of Mme Verdurin and her little clan.

1 *La Correspondance de Marcel Proust. Chronologie et commentaire critique,* University of Illinois Press, 1949.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In 1893, too, Proust began to prepare the collection of poems, essays, and short stories that was to be published in 1896 as *Les Plaisirs et les jours,* after a delay occasioned by Mme Lemaire's tardiness in providing the illustrations. Perhaps more important was the beginning of his acquaintance with Reynaldo Hahn, which was to do a good deal to inspire his first attempt at a novel, the story about Jean Santeuil. —*J. M. C.*

To Robert Dreyfus[1]

96, rue La Fontaine,
Auteuil, Tuesday [28? August 1888]

My dear friend,
The gentleman in question is a thin, wizened, fussy little man.[2] Extremely intelligent and cultivated. Marvellously agile and penetrating mind. Almost subtle in his refinement. His teaching is rich, *lively,* and most *distinguished.* A rigorous, virtuous thinker. Much more intelligent and, above all, intellectual than artistic. Still, he admires Leconte de Lisle. But finds him very "odd"! I can see him now, all movement, all flame—his little eyes lively—taking on the expression of a psychological vivisectionist—"that predilection for the strange, the exotic"!—But all in all his course is remarkable, a firm, flexible intellectual discipline; he is full of information and ideas, a most reliable, most intelligently cultivated guide for this year's circular journey from Homer to Chénier by way of Petronius. A bit too "elevated," too "serious," smacks a little too much of the classroom and the literary journal, but you stand only to profit, and beyond any possible doubt, now that our poor Gaucher is dead,[3] he is *by far the best* professor of rhetoric. I told him about you—without knowing you would have him—a year ago. I'll do it again in the same terms. I wouldn't dare repeat my words to you, because it strikes me as almost obscene and "physically" disagreeable to say such things straight out, but I assure you that he'll be prepared to admire you.—Cucheval is not polite, cold, and stiff like him, but vehemently, broadly coarse. A ferocious *schoolmaster,* crude and uncouth—but all in all, I assure you, it's quite pleasant. This Brunetière, so callow and "direct," is not lacking in savor.[4] It's rather amusing to let oneself be guided by two such different minds. Even if you were to be considerably Cuchevalized, it would do you no harm. Don't go taking him for an imbecile because he makes idiotic jokes and because he's a savage, insensitive to exquisite combinations of syllables or contours. In all other respects he is excellent, a welcome change from the imbeciles who speak in polished sentences. That is something he just can't do. It's delightful. An ideal professor and not in the least boring.

M. Dupré is an infinitely more amiable, nicer man. I have learned to appreciate the charm of his affectionate, sensitive mind in the body of an old soldier. But he's a bore. It's true that he knows Dierx and Leconte de Lisle (the works).[5] But what good will it do you to hear modern authors spoken of by a man who has too many reservations about liking them? It will bore you, in fact it will make you stamp your foot and gnash your teeth. You will have endless discussions, because he's a good sort and not at all strict. But what then? He will come out of them modernized. But you?

In short, Dauphiné is a lecture course, Cucheval a class, Dupré often a conversation. But the lecture course is remarkable, the class excellent, and the conversation boring.

Would you be a good boy—as you often are—and let me tell you a few little things that will relieve my mind. This is why. I beg you not to make fun of me, I wouldn't think of measuring myself with you. I think much too well of you for that, and M. Jallifier[6] can tell you that these are no empty words. But what we have in common with a few others is that we know something of literature and love it, that we have other ways of looking at Art, and that we judge translations of writers or artists in accordance with very different rules. Well, I beg

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you—for your own sake—don't do what I did, don't proselytize your teachers. I could do it, thanks to an infinitely liberal and charming man, Gaucher. I wrote papers that weren't at all like school exercises. The result was that two months later a dozen imbeciles were writing in decadent style, that Cucheval thought me a troublemaker, that I set the whole class about the ears, and that some of my classmates came to regard me as a poseur. Luckily it only lasted for two months, but a month ago Cucheval said: "He'll pass, because he was only clowning, but fifteen will fail because of him." They will want to cure you. Your comrades will think you're crazy or feeble-minded. For several months I read all my French papers aloud in class, I was hooted and applauded. If it hadn't been for Gaucher, I'd have been torn to pieces.[7]

Now, since you say you will write, this is what will interest me most. First what are you doing? And then tell me about the "amiable person ill concealed behind the initials D. H." Intellectually I believe I know, and M. Jallifier, who spoke about him to me for over an hour, has confirmed me in my idea, but really, what is he driving at? Why, after having been very pleasant to me, does he drop me *completely* and make it very clear to me, and then after a month of cutting me dead he comes and greets me. And his cousin Bizet? Why does he speak of his feelings of friendship for me and then drop me even worse?[8]

What do they want? To get rid of me, to annoy me, to mystify me, or what?

I used to think they were so nice.

Of course I'm telling you this very much in confidence, between friends. Don't mention it to anyone. But you are their friend, you must know.

And mine, too. You must tell me, because when one doesn't know what to think, one is in danger of being too cold or making a nuisance of oneself.

Oh! Making a nuisance of myself, that has always been my nightmare. I think I've done it this time. You'll tell me, won't you? I'll be very grateful.

Marcel Proust

---

1 Robert Dreyfus (1873–1937), one of Proust's friends at the Lycée Condorcet. Later a journalist on the staff of *Le Figaro* and a historian, he kept every letter he received from Proust.

2 Oswald Dauphiné (1846–1924), who had just been appointed professor of rhetoric at Condorcet.

3 Maxime Gaucher (b. 1829), literary critic on *La Revue bleue,* had been Proust's teacher of French and Greek during the year 1887–88; he died on 24 or 25 July 1888.

4 Victor Cucheval-Clarigny, Proust's teacher of Latin in 1887–88, termed his pupil's progress in Latin mediocre and thought him "erratic and hare-brained." Fifteen years later, Proust ridiculed his teacher in his "Salon de la princesse Edmond de Polignac" (*Le Figaro,* 6 September 1903), where a lady's footman asks: "Your name, sir." "Monsieur Cucheval." (The name in French sounds more or less like *cul de cheval* [horse's arse]. Tr.) "Sir! I asked you your name." Etc. Here Proust compares Cucheval with the eminent literary critic Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1906), from 1893 editor of the conservative *Revue des Deux Mondes.*

5 M. Dupré substituted for Gaucher during his last illness. Léon Dierx (1838–1912) and Charles Leconte de Lisle (1818–94) were leaders of the Parnassian school of poets.

6 Régis Jallifier had been Proust's teacher of history and geography in 1884–85. His name at least is suggested by M. Jacomier, professor of ancient history in *Jean Santeuil.*

7 Another schoolfellow, Pierre Lavallée, remembered Proust's essays, "so rich in impressions and images, already quite 'Proustian' with their sentences larded with asides and parentheses . . . . I can still see and hear Marcel reading his papers aloud, and the excellent, the charming M. Gaucher commenting, praising, criticizing, then suddenly overcome with laughter at the stylistic boldness, which actually delighted him."

8 "D. H." (Daniel Halévy), Jacques Bizet, and Dreyfus were the three "intelligent boys" in the class, of whom Proust writes in *Jean Santeuil.* They thought Jean/Marcel "insincere and affected" and felt an "inexplicable antipathy" towards him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To Robert Dreyfus

[L'Isle-Adam, 7 September 1888]

My dear friend,

Were you trying to tell me politely that Halévy thinks I'm cracked? I must tell you that I don't quite understand.

I do not believe that a type is a character. I *do* believe that what we think we can know of a character is purely a product of association of ideas. Let me explain, while at the same time admitting that my theory may be wrong, since it is entirely my own.[1]

Suppose then that in life or in a literary work you see a man weeping over someone else's misfortunes. Since whenever you have known someone to experience pity, that person was good, kind and sensitive, you will infer that this man is sensitive, kind and good. For in our minds we construct a character from a very few traits, with the help of our opinions which presuppose other traits. But this reasoning is most hypothetical. *Quare,* if Alceste shuns his fellow men, Coquelin attributes it to an absurdly foul disposition, Worms to a noble contempt for the base passions.[2] *Item* in life. Halévy drops me, making sure I know that he's doing it on purpose, then a month later he comes and greets me. Now, among the different persons of whom I am composed, the romantic, to whose voice I pay little attention, says to me: "He does it to tease you, to amuse himself, to put you to the test, but then he has regrets and doesn't want to abandon you entirely." And this person represents Halévy as a whimsical friend, who really wants to know me.

But the distrustful person, whom I prefer, tells me it's much simpler, that Halévy can't bear me, that my ardor struck him—him, so calm and reasonable—first as ridiculous and then as intolerable—that he wanted to make me feel just that, that I've been a nuisance, and to get rid of me. Then, when at last he saw that I wouldn't bother him any more with my presence, he spoke to me. This person doesn't know whether Halévy's little act was brought on by pity, indifference or moderation, but he does know that it means nothing and it worries him very little. To tell the truth, it interests him only as a psychological problem.

But there's the question of the exponent: is it x or is it y? That's the crux. If it's x (the sum of the phenomena of friendship), the break amounts to no more than a caprice, a test, or an access of ill humor, and the reconciliation is everything.

If it's y—antipathy—the reconciliation is nothing, the break is everything.

Forgive me. I've taken a whole letter to expound my theory, and now Joyant[3] is calling me. My letter will be for another time. But on this question you can further my psychological investigations. Because you know perfectly well whether Halévy said to you (and I wouldn't hold it against him): What a pest that Proust is!

Or that Proust is rather nice.

True, there's a third solution, the most likely:

That he hasn't spoken of me to you at all.

I'm just an inert element.

Enlighten me about this little problem. I'll answer any questions you like.

Three apologies:

1) For not answering you sooner: but my mother went away and then my brother....

2) So badly written and hurried in every respect: Joyant is waiting for me.

3) For bothering you with this . . . It interests me! . . .

Yours ever,
Marcel Proust

---

1 This is the earliest known mention of Proust's theory that each individual is made up of many selves—a theory he was later to put into practice in *Remembrance of Things Past,* where certain characters appear illogical or inconsistent, as did people he observed. His formulation of it here may owe something, despite his disclaimer, to an article he is almost certain to have read: "Hamlet" (*Le Temps,* 5 October 1886), by Anatole France, Proust's favorite author at the time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2 The principal character in Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, as interpreted by two of the leading actors of the day at the Comédie-Française: Constant-Benoît Coquelin and Gustave-Hippolyte Worms.

3 Edouard Joyant (1872–1953), Proust's classmate in rhetoric at Condorcet in 1887–88.

To Alphonse Darlu[1]

[Tuesday 2 October 1888]

Dear Sir,

This morning you spoke to us about young people who too soon acquire unfortunate habits of thought, who split into two parts, so to speak, and who can neither do nor think anything without their consciousness studying and analysing their acts or thoughts. I trust you will forgive me if I, your pupil of only two days, take the liberty of consulting you on a moral problem, as it were. In these two days I have conceived so great an admiration for you that I feel an irresistible need to ask you for some important advice before embarking on the study of philosophy.

You spoke so well of such a disorder that, if it had not been for the presence of my comrades, I could hardly have stopped myself from asking you what remedy there is for it.

When at the age of about fourteen or fifteen I began to retire into myself and to study my inner life, it was not a source of suffering, by no means.

Later, when I was about sixteen, it became intolerable, most of all physically. I experienced extreme fatigue, a kind of obsession. Now it is not at all like that. Since my health, which used to be delicate, has become almost good, I have been able to react against the exhaustion and despair caused by this constant cleavage.

But though my suffering has changed almost entirely in character, it is no less intense. It has become intellectualized. I can no longer take complete pleasure in what used to be my highest joy, the works of literature. When, for instance, I read a poem by Leconte de Lisle, even while I am savoring the infinite delights of former days, my other self examines me, amuses itself looking for the causes of my pleasure, finds them in a certain relationship between me and the work, specifically, it imagines conditions diametrically opposed to beauty, and ends by killing nearly all my pleasure. For more than a year I have been unable to judge anything in a literary light, I am devoured by the need for set rules by which to judge works of art with certainty. But in that case, to cure myself, I shall have to destroy my inner life or rather the constant contemplation of my inner life, and this strikes me as frightful.

Undoubtedly this situation occurs frequently in young persons of my age, whom ill health obliged in the past to live a good deal to themselves.

I am sure you know what manner of thinking can rid one and cure one of this disorder, if it is one.

I hope, sir, that you will put it down to my extreme admiration and my infinite desire to know what you think of all this, and forgive me for the oddness and perhaps indiscretion of confiding *intimate* thoughts to a stranger.

But thanks to the little I have heard you say, I already feel that I know you. I beg you, sir, not to make the least reference in class to this letter, which for me is above all a kind of confession.

Your student and profound admirer,

Marcel Proust

1 Marie-Alphonse Darlu (1849–1921), professor of philosophy at the Lycée Condorcet, later Inspector of Public Education; he published no books.

To Anatole France[1]

[About 15 May 1889]

Dear Sir,

It occurs to me that you have just read M. Chantavoine's article[2] and that an expression of passionate sympathy might

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

console you if, as seems possible, those unintelligent pages have had the power to grieve you.

For the last four years Saturday has been my red-letter day, the day when *Le Temps* brings me the purest of joys. For four years I have read and reread your divine books, to the point of knowing them by heart.[3] For four years I have loved you so much that I believe I understand you a little. And indeed, if I ever have enough talent, I shall try to write what I think of you, and I assure you that my article will give you more pleasure than that of your "colleague" M. Chantavoine.

In the meantime I content myself with loving you, with trying to understand you more fully, and with reading your books to the more intelligent of my comrades at Condorcet, where I have won you some staunch friends! I have gone so far as to catechize those retarded professors who did not know you. What joy it has given me this year to find in my professor of philosophy, who is a great thinker,[4] a highly intelligent love for your books.

You have taught me to find a beauty I did not appreciate before in books, ideas, and people. You have beautified the universe for me, and I am so much your friend that not a day passes without my thinking of you several times, though I have some difficulty in imagining your physical presence.[5] With the memory of the hours of exquisite delight you have given me I have built, deep in my heart, a chapel filled with you.

I suffered so much at seeing you publicly denigrated in that article that I have taken the liberty of writing to tell you how cruelly it afflicted me.

A student of philosophy[6]

1 The well-known novelist; "Anatole France" was the pseudonym of Jacques Anatole François Thibault (1844–1924).

2 On 15 May 1889 the *Journal des débats* published a highly disparaging review by Henri Chantavoine of Anatole France's recently published novel *Balthasar*.

3 An exaggeration: the weekly chronicles by Anatole France had been appearing in *Le Temps* for only a little over three years, since 21 March 1886.

4 In a note to his translation (1906) of Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies,* Proust wrote of Darlu: ". . . the most admirable teacher I have known, the man who has had the greatest influence on my thinking . . . ." But a few years later he had changed his mind, writing in a notebook: "No one has ever had such influence on me (as Darlu and I have recognized it to be bad)."

5 In *Swann's Way,* the narrator imagines Bergotte as "a frail and disappointed old man." Later (*Within a Budding Grove*), he is surprised to meet "a youngish, uncouth, thickset and myopic little man, with a red nose curled like a snail-shell and a goatee beard"—the spit and image of Anatole France as he was when Proust first met him.

6 The handwriting of the original letter, the chronology, tone, and ideas show that this "student of philosophy" can only have been Marcel Proust.

To Paul Desjardins[1]

This Monday morning [December 1892]

Dear Sir,

Forgive me for not having subscribed yet to *L'Action Morale.*[2] I was unable to, but shall do so now.

In the hope of being enlightened, I take the liberty of submitting to you an impression made on me by the first issue, that you were kind enough to give me. I read with stupefaction that one should favor[3] a useless and as it were sensuous (like perfume) charity rather than a utilitarian charity (utilitarian not in the virtuous intention of the giver, but in producing a result appropriate to the receiver) which, says the article, leaves the soul dry. These words would not have surprised me (even if they displeased me) in M. Renan's *Marcus Aurelius,* Al. France's *Thaïs,* or M. Barrès' *Jardin de Bérénice.*[4] Since these great artists consider charity exclusively (and in my humble opinion it is a weakness on their part) in an aesthetic light, they are careful not to divest it of this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

charm of "uselessness," the most artistic sort of elegance.

But that you should allow such things to be written in your journal—that is the cause of my stupefaction.

Haven't you banished pure aestheticism from art itself (and this, it seems to me, is the excessive element in your doctrine and amounts to a confusion of two ideas) only to inject it into ethics, where it has no business?[5] Suppose someone were to pour perfume over the feet of a poor man instead of clothing him: wouldn't he be cultivating the artistic pleasure of performing so splendidly useless an act rather than the virtue of wanting to do the poor man good? Consequently a utilitarian intent is implicit in this sort of charity rather than in the charity which strives to do the most good to the object of its love.

What language! I am sure you think I am abusing your permission to dispense with literary pretensions[6] in writing of these matters.

Pardon my indiscretion, but you know the extreme importance I attach to everything that issues from your admirable mind as well as to those men whose good will has rallied round your thoughts and feelings.

Rest assured, sir, of my affectionate esteem,

Yours sincerely
Marcel Proust

1 Paul-Louis Desjardins (1859–1940), critic and philosopher, member of a distinguished family of upper-bourgeois intellectuals.

2 The first issue of the *Bulletin* of the Union for Moral Action appeared on 7 November 1892.

3 Proust first wrote "que vous recommandez" (that you favor), then changed it to "qu'on devait recommander."

4 Ernest Renan, *Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde antique* (1881), vol. VII of his *Histoire des origines du Christianisme*; Anatole France, *Thaïs* (1890); Maurice Barrès, *Le Jardin de Bérénice* (1891). Barrès was a nationalist-politician whose essay-novels were popular at the time.

5 In *Swann's Way,* Legrandin, quoting a poem by Desjardins, adds: "Perhaps you have never read Paul Desjardins. Read him, my boy, read him; in these days he is converted, they tell me, into a preaching friar, but he used to have the most charming watercolor touch . . . ."

6 The first number of the *Bulletin* carried the notice: "In these pages there should be no pretension to literary form," repeated in each issue for the first year of publication.

To Charles Grandjean[1]

[Monday 13 ? November 1893]

Dear Sir,

I knew you to be capable of the utmost delicacy and generosity, of the most ingenious, diverse, and indefatigable charity, and yet I was amazed at the miraculous kindness of your writing again as you have done.

Very well, I renounce the Ecole des Chartes, not without a regret, I must say, inspired not by it but by the Ecole de Rome. Could I go there otherwise? And undoubtedly the picture you paint (so clear, so vivid that only you could have done it) is bleak. But is the Cour des Comptes—or diplomacy in Paris—any more enjoyable? But I think that if you thus demolish all this, it is to build on its ruins the independent, aesthetic city of which we have been dreaming together. And when you have hit on the material means by which I might do that, will you be . . . how shall I put it . . . so kind—and the kindness you have already shown me can be qualified only by a superlative—as rare as what it denotes—as to write and tell me about it.

Please tender my respects to Mme Grandjean and give my regards to your little boy.

Your sincerely grateful
Marcel Proust

You are very much mistaken in supposing my intellectual development to be far advanced. Since my last year at the *lycée,* it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has not only been suspended but has gone astray and regressed. That, I believe, is why my writings have been the products solely of imagination and sensibility, the two ignorant Muses which require no cultivation. I still have the illusion that I might have been something else, which is comforting and sad and undoubtedly an illusion.

1 Charles Grandjean (1857–1933) had a distinguished career as archivist of the Senate and Inspector-General of Historical Monuments. He was a long-time friend of Anatole France. Proust had recently asked for Grandjean's advice about choosing a career.

To Reynaldo Hahn[1]

[May? 1895]

Forgive me: this letter was mixed up with mine when they were brought to me in bed, I didn't look at the envelope and I opened it . . . . Here it is. Enclosed.

It is possible, even probable, that I shall come and wish you good evening after dinner (at about half past nine). Don't send word if you won't be there. I am not dining at home and shall be delighted in any case to walk that little way, which is my "road of hope" and always has been, come to think of it. In the days when I went to the avenue Marigny every morning to see Mme de Chevigné pass, I always took the rue La Ville l'Evèque, the place des Voitures, the same itinerary.[2]

I was extremely bored at *Tannhäuser* up to the solo. And in spite of the general cries of admiration, Elisabeth's languishing prayer left me cold. But how beautiful the whole last part is. I definitely disagree with you about the phrase "legendary rather than human," though it sounds so well *in the voice* of our friend[3] and goes so well with her type of beauty.—The more legendary Wagner is, the more human I find him, and in him the most magnificent artifice of the imagination strikes me only as the compelling symbolic expression of moral truths.

[*No signature*]

1 Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947), French composer and conductor. Born in Caracas, Venezuela, he was a child prodigy and entered the Paris Conservatory when only eleven. He was nineteen when Proust met him and they struck up a friendship which lasted until Proust's death.

2 Reynaldo Hahn lived in the rue du Cirque, the next street after the avenue Marigny. The Comtesse Adhéaume de Chevigné, née Laure de Sade (1866–1936), lived in the rue de Miromesnil; for a time in 1892 Proust waited every day to see her pass, as the narrator waits in *The Guermantes Way* for the Duchesse de Guermantes to pass.

3 Mme Emile Straus, née Geneviève Halévy (1850–1926), widow of the composer Georges Bizet. (She was one of Proust's models for the Duchesse de Guermantes.) Mme Straus had alleged—a statement with which Hahn seems to have been in agreement—that the public's infatuation with "legendary and mystical works" was undermining the popularity of "human works" (such as the operettas of her own father, Fromental Halévy). When *Tannhäuser* was first produced in Paris, in 1861, it was received with boos and catcalls. On 13 May 1895, after thirty-four years of neglect, it was again performed at the Opéra, and greeted this time with wild enthusiasm.

To Suzette Lemaire[1]

[Monday 20 May? 1895]

Dear Mlle Suzette,

You've got me quite wrong. I don't conceal my Wagnerism from Reynaldo, why should I since he shares it? The point we disagree on is this: I believe that the essence of music is to arouse the mysterious depths (which literature and generally speaking all finite modes of expression that make use either of words and consequently of ideas, which are determinate things, or of objects—painting, sculpture—cannot express) of our souls, which begin where all the arts aimed at the finite stop and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where science as well stops, and which for that reason can be termed religious. This doesn't make much sense when said so quickly, it deserves a longer conversation.

Since Reynaldo, on the contrary, believes that music is always subordinate to the word, he regards it as a way of expressing sentiments of a particular kind, nuances of *conversation,* if you will. You are aware that a Beethoven symphony (which to me is not only the most beautiful of music but also fulfills the highest *function* of music, because it operates outside the particular and concrete—is in essence, that is, quite apart from the particular external objects to which it may attach, as vague and profound as our emotion) bores him dreadfully. He is far too much of an artist not to admire it profoundly, but that's not what music is for him and basically it doesn't interest him. I have never concealed from him our disagreement on this all-important point. And if I said "while Reynaldo isn't listening," I merely meant to remind you of the fact that he was not of that opinion. If I were to praise Amaury in your presence, I would be quite capable of saying, "I hope Mlle Suzette isn't listening." To tell the truth, I don't like to discuss Reynaldo's musical opinions in company. In the first place it would be most presumptuous of me. I am only too well aware how much condescension there is in your kindness or his, when he consents to talk music with me or you painting. And I would not invite ridicule by opposing the opinion of an ignoramus to that of a specialized artist. Besides, general discussions of that sort are sterile. It is quite clear to me that Reynaldo's way of looking at music follows quite naturally from his temperament as a literary musician. His attitudes, believe me, are not the fruit of his theories, his theories, as always, are his marvelously agile mind's justification of his temperament. One does not fight a temperament and I have too profound an admiration for his to have any desire to fight it. Lastly and especially, the discussion of music soon gets on Reynaldo's nerves, it pains him. If I think I have something theoretical to say to him, I satisfy my conscience by saying it when alone with him.

What bliss that you are coming back. You will find me shaky in health, but very glad to see you . . . .

Till tomorrow evening perhaps[2]. . . what a joy!

Marcel Proust

---

1 Suzanne (called Suzette) Lemaire (? 1866–1946), only daughter of Mme Madeleine Lemaire. Like her mother, she painted flowers. She never married.

2 At Mme Lemaire's soirée on Tuesday, 21 May 1895, *Le Gaulois* notes (22 May) the presence of the "young poet M. Proust."

To Reynaldo Hahn[1]

[Friday 15 November 1895]

Dinner yesterday at the Daudets with my little dear one, M. de Goncourt, Coppée, M. Philippe, M. Vacquès [*sic*].[2] Noted with sadness (1) the frightful materialism, so surprising in "intellectuals." They account for character and genius by physical habits or race. Differences between Musset, Baudelaire, and Verlaine explained by the properties of the spirits they drank, the characters of certain persons by their race (anti-Semitism). Even more astounding in Daudet,[3] a pure and brilliant intellect shining through the mists and storms of his nerves, a small star on the sea. All that is most unintelligent. The narrowest view of the mind (for everything is a view of the mind) is one in which it has not yet gained sufficient self-awareness and believes itself to be derived from the body. (2) None of them (I always exclude Reynaldo, in whose mind I never cease to admire all the nuances of truth, as sublimely distinct as the nuances of the sky in the sea) understands anything about poetry. Daudet's comparison of Musset and Baudelaire is about as true as if one were to say to someone who knew neither Mme Straus nor my con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cierge: "Mme Straus has black hair and black eyes, a rather large nose, red lips, a rather good figure"—and the same about my concierge, and the other would reply: "Why, they're identical." True enough, a certain overworked rhetoric might lead one to liken Musset to Baudelaire from the standpoint of composition, although they have about as much in common as Bossuet and Murger.[4] If you were to describe your impressions of the ocean to someone who had never seen it, he might imagine it to be the same as a switchback. A person who has no feeling for poetry and who is not moved by Truth, has never really read Baudelaire. Hence these statements made by Coppée and Goncourt. (3) Sentences spoken by Daudet (in the director's garden), Daudet all over, acute observation, but musty-smelling, a trifle vulgar and pretentious for all his sharpness. He's the Céline Chaumont of the novel.[5] (4) Mme Daudet charming, but how bourgeois! A poor young fellow arrives, he doesn't know anyone but her son, who isn't there. In spite of herself she does everything possible to freeze him out, in five minutes he has become the "intruder," and from time to time she says: "I don't know Monsieur, I've never laid eyes on him before." The same with me. When I called on her for the first time and thanked her for letting me come, she replied: "M. Hahn asked me to." Monstrous! The aristocracy certainly have their faults, but show a true superiority when thanks to their mastery of good manners and easy charm they are able to affect the most exquisite affability for five minutes, or feign sympathy and brotherhood for an hour. And the Jews (detested in that household in the name of I don't know what principle, since He whom they crucified is also banished, from their son's wedding, for instance)[6] have the same quality though in another way, a kind of charitable self-esteem, a cordiality without pride, which is infinitely precious. How pitiable Mme Daudet looks in her treatment of poor M. Philippe, by contrast with Mme de Brantes or Mme Lyon,[7] whom in this respect I find it natural to lump together. From the viewpoint of art, to be so lacking in self-mastery, so incapable of playing a part, is abominable, made all the worse by her dumpy figure. One almost yearns for the obnoxious grace of Don Juan in his scene with M. Dimanche, the inane grace of M. de Florian, or the repulsive grace of the Duc de Gramont.[8] But great intelligence and sensibility (though slightly exasperating and sometimes false) are here, and extremely interesting. In sum, a charming person.

Daudet is delightful, the son of a Moorish king who might have married a princess of Avignon, but simplistic in his intelligence. He thinks Mallarmé is fooling the public. One must always assume that a pact has been made between the poet's intelligence and his sensibility of which he himself is unaware, that he is its plaything. It's more interesting and more profound. Laziness or narrow-mindedness to be explained by a physical pact (with charlatanesque intention) with his disciples. If it were that, it would cease to interest us. And it cannot be that.

[*No signature*]

---

1 Pages torn from a notebook, with jottings by Hahn on the back of one page.

2 Edmond de Goncourt (1822–96), who also left an account of this dinner party in his journal for 14 November [1895]; François Coppée (1842–1908), Parnassian poet, member of the French Academy, harshly treated in Goncourt's journal; Charles-Louis Philippe (1874–1909), author of realistic, rather sordid novels, among them *Bubu de Montparnasse* (1901); Dr. Henri Vaquez (1860–1936), cardiologist and professor of medicine.

3 The famous novelist Alphonse Daudet (1840–97), author of *Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872) and many other books.

4 Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), theologian and moralist, bishop at the time of Louis XIV, was noted for his sermons; Henry Murger (1822–61), wrote the well-known *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* and other books about Parisian low life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5 Proust is comparing Daudet as a novelist to the brilliant but frivolous comedienne and variety entertainer Marie-Céline Chaumont (1848–1926).

6 Léon Daudet's first marriage, in 1891 to Jeanne Victor-Hugo, was a civil ceremony, at the Mairie in Passy.

7 Mme Daudet, née Julia-Rosalie-Céleste Allard (1844–1940), the wife of the writer. She was herself the author of poems and essays. Mme Charles-Léon Lyon-Caen, née Louise-Marguerite May, wife of a member of the Institut de France, was a highly cultivated Jewish society woman.

8 In Molière's play, the aristocrat Don Juan flatters the merchant, M. Dimanche, in order to take advantage of him. Like the Comte de Florian, Agénor, Duc de Gramont, father of Proust's friend the Duc de Guiche, was a diplomat.

II

Proust was to work intermittently at the drafts of *Jean Santeuil* for another five years or so. Meanwhile, in 1896, Mme Lemaire having at last produced her illustrations, *Les Plaisirs et les jours* (a collection of Proust's stories and essays) was published, with a preface which Mme Arman de Caillavet extracted from Anatole France. The expensive, limited edition meant comparatively few readers, and, though many of the press notices were quite complimentary, what reputation the book won for Proust was that of a rich dilettante. In December 1896 Proust met Reynaldo Hahn's English cousin, Marie Nordlinger, who was to give him a great deal of help over his Ruskin translations.

In December 1897 the Dreyfus Affair took a new turn when *Le Figaro* published facsimiles of the document that had given rise to Dreyfus's conviction, together with the handwriting of Comte Esterhazy, who, in the eyes of the Dreyfusards, was the chief suspect. In January 1898 Zola published *J'accuse,* his famous letter to the President of the Republic asserting that there was an Establishment conspiracy to prevent justice; he was promptly arrested and brought to trial. An officer in the case, Colonel Picquart, who had discovered some forged documents in the official dossier, was himself imprisoned and, in September, placed in solitary confinement. At this point Proust came into the open as a Dreyfusard and collected signatures for a petition on Picquart's behalf.

By the end of 1899 the *Jean Santeuil* project was petering out. Encouraged if not directly persuaded by his mother, Proust began to study Ruskin with a view, first, to writing about him, then to translating some of his work. In October of that year he was reading *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* at the Bibliothèque Nationale. The year 1900 saw the appearance in various periodicals of the first fruits of these studies: an obituary on Ruskin in January; "Notes and Reminiscences: Ruskinian Pilgrimages in France" in February; three essays on Ruskin and Amiens in April and August. His "Ruskin period" was to go on for another four years or so. —*J. M. C.*

To his mother

[Fontainebleau]
[Thursday morning 22 October 1896]

My dear little Mama,

My asthma is back down to the Paris level (I mean it's no worse than in Paris, at least I don't think it is). I sleep a good deal less (at least than in Paris lately). There's a little noise here after all, and that bothers me a good deal. I'm terribly sorry I can't comfort you with news of some sort of pleasure. But so far I haven't had one minute of gaiety or reverie, or even of well-being. But perhaps it's only that it always takes me so long to get started. Yesterday I walked in the forest for two hours, in the rain. But it didn't hurt me. When I got back, I was so sleepy I was unable to work, though I couldn't sleep. After dinner Léon Daudet took me out driving in the forest until a quarter past twelve, so I haven't been too sad (except from five to seven) but he insists on taking his meals with me. That makes for a lot of talk at the table, which I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

detest. I still haven't received the books Reynaldo was supposed to send, so I have nothing to read . . . . If I don't happen to telephone you today, here are the books you might send, but *immediately*. Balzac, *Le Curé de village, Le Ménage de garçon, Le Vieille Fille, Les Chouans.*—Shakespeare, the volumes with *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in them. The first volume of *Wilhelm Meister* and *Middlemarch* by G. Eliot. I embrace you with all my heart . . . .

A thousand kisses,

Marcel

To Constantin de Brancovan[1]

[Toward the end of September 1898]

Dear Prince,

My brother has asked me to recommend to you (for no specific purpose, just in general) M. Heresco, a young doctor and former intern of the Paris hospitals, who is going to practice in Bucharest. He seems to be an absolutely remarkable man with a great future. Your good will could be extremely helpful to him.

Several times this summer I wanted to chat with you, at least in a letter, and I should have liked to write. But Mama was very ill and I was always with her, incapable of doing anything. Mariéton tells me that you've turned Dreyfusard. That gives me pleasure in many ways. First—let's not be egotistical—for the sake of the cause. If even ten persons who were well known and consequently above suspicion were to come out for revisionist ideas, the truth would not only be on the march,[2] it would have gone a long way. Next, I think this will be a further bond between us, and that gives me great pleasure. And lastly because, as Ibsen put it so eloquently, there is hardly anything which is not at once the object of our faith and of our doubt. Since Christ himself doubted on the Mount of Olives, a Dreyfusard is surely entitled to moments of misgiving, in which he asks himself: Have I espoused the truth? And every time I see some of those whom I regard as the most intelligent, the most amiable, and the best, among whom I number you (*littera non erubescit*), sharing my opinion, I have the impression that this gives it greater force, and I feel comforted. If you have nothing to do one evening, let me know, and arrange to meet me about nine o'clock at Weber's or some such place; it would give me great pleasure to talk with you.

Your devoted

Marcel Proust

1 Prince Constantin Bassaraba de Brancovan (1875–1967), son of the Princesse Rachel Bassaraba de Brancovan and brother of Comtesse Anna de Noailles. He later edited the magazine *La Renaissance latine.*

2 Zola had concluded an article in *Le Figaro* (25 November 1897) with the sentence which soon became famous: "Truth is on the march, nothing can stop it now."

To Marie Nordlinger[1]

Tuesday [5 December 1899]

Mademoiselle,

What a pity that you are not in Paris and what a pity that when you were we knew each other so little and that I failed to take greater advantage of the opportunity . . . .

I have not been very happy since I had the honor of seeing you. My health, which was none too good before, has got still worse. And unfortunately my imagination, which gave me some pleasure even if it gave none to others (for you are an exception in your taste for my writing, as you are in all things), seems to have been affected by my weariness. I have been working for years on a very long-term project,[2] but without getting anywhere. And there are times when I wonder if I do not resemble Dorothea Brooke's husband in *Middlemarch* and if I am not a collector of ruins.[3] For the past fortnight I have been working on a little piece quite different from what I usually write, about Ruskin and certain cathedrals.[4]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If, as I hope, I succeed in having it published in a periodical, I'll send it to you as soon as it comes out. If I had published anything else, I'd have sent it, but thus far I've only encumbered my bureau drawers . . . .

Do remember me to your sister and believe me, Mademoiselle, your most respectfully admiring and grateful

Marcel Proust

---

1 Marie Nordlinger (1876–1961), a first cousin of Reynaldo Hahn, spent most of her life in England. She was later to help Proust with his translations of Ruskin.

2 I.e., *Jean Santeuil,* begun in 1895.

3 "And now" Dorothea, having promised to devote herself to Casaubon's work, "pictured to herself the days, and months, and years which she must spend in sorting what might be called shattered mummies, and fragments of a tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from crushed ruins—sorting them as food for a theory which was already withered in birth like an elfin child" (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*). A French translation of *Middlemarch* had been published in 1890.

4 This "little piece" of work became the essays that make up the preface to Proust's translation of Ruskin's *The Bible of Amiens,* which were published in *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts* for 1 April and 1 August 1900 and in *Le Mercure de France* for April 1900.

To Marie Nordlinger

[Shortly after 21 January 1900]

Mademoiselle,

Learning of Ruskin's death,[1] I cannot help thinking of you so intensely that I *must* write to you. Not that that was needed to make me think of you. I have been ill for some time, unable to write without difficulty and unwilling to dictate a letter addressed to you, so that all my thoughts of friendly gratitude, for your letter, for the book you sent, and its precious annotations,[2] have made themselves at home within me, not in some remote recess where one visits them only rarely, but in that chamber of the heart to which one repairs several times a day. Still, when I learned of Ruskin's death, I wished to acquaint you before anyone else with my sadness, a wholesome sadness, let me say, replete with consolation, for I am shown how paltry a thing death is when I see how vigorously this dead man still lives, how I admire him, listen to him, and make a greater effort to understand him than I do a good many of the living . . . . Just imagine, when you sent me Ruskin's little book covered with your charming notes, which were like dried flowers on every page, one of them culled as it were by the two of us together, since you had delicately taken it from my book, I had just written some sentences which I've forgotten (and shall send you when they appear) about something of Ruskin's, the gist of which is more or less as follows: "Thus he has given us pleasure after the manner of those who send us something they have long made use of for themselves with no thought of giving it away later on, and to sensitive souls these are the most precious of presents."[3] And a moment later I receive this book bearing the marks of your personal use, so delicate a gift—and what is it but a book by Ruskin! O pre-established harmonies!—

Has Reynaldo told you about that wicked Ruskin's stipulation that his works were not to be translated into French, so that my poor translations will remain unpublished. But I shall quote long fragments in my essays.

Respectfully your grateful

Marcel Proust

---

1 *Le Figaro* for 21 January 1900 reported: "M. John Ruskin, the illustrious art critic, died in London yesterday of influenza at the age of eighty-one."

2 Mlle Nordlinger had sent Proust her own copy of *The Queen of the Air* (1869), with her notes.

3 A roughly similar sentence occurs in Proust's essay "Ruskin à Notre-Dame d'Amiens" (*Mercure de France,* April 1900).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To Marie Nordlinger

[first days of March 1900]

I am more touched than I can say by your kindness to me. But from now on I do not permit you to send me so much as *one* newspaper article. Much as I value the references you give me, which enable me to obtain them, it distresses me to receive all these things which would give me far more pleasure if I rather than you had gone to the trouble of obtaining them. Accordingly, if from now on you send me anything other than such references, it will be disobedience, a word which, believe me, implies no pretension on my part, but only a belief in the rights of a reciprocal authority which two persons who are in sympathy confer upon each other. Your verses are charming and evoke in my memory the delicious bouquet of spring flowers you once brought me from an excursion you went on, such as my hay fever would have prevented me from taking. But you are a poet and have no need of going to the country to bring back flowers. Don't complain of not having *learned.* Strictly speaking, no knowledge is involved, for there is none outside the mysterious associations effected by our memory and the tact which our invention acquires in its approach to words. Knowledge, in the sense of something which exists ready-made outside us and which we can learn as in the Sciences—is meaningless in art.[1] On the contrary, it is only when the scientific relationships between words have vanished from our minds and they have taken on a life in which the chemical elements are forgotten in a new individuality, that technique, the tact which knows their repugnances, flatters their desires, knows their beauty, plays on their forms, matches their affinities, can begin. And that can happen only when a human being is a human being and ceases to be so much carbon, so much phosphorus, etc. Victor Hugo, whose Shakespeare I fear I do not like, says

"For know that the word is a living being."[2]

You know. And consequently you love words, you don't harm them, you play with them, you entrust your secrets to them, you teach them to paint, you teach them to sing. And your horror of Yellow is an exquisite "Symphony in Yellow"; God seems to have given you a sample of everything yellow he possesses, from the flowers of the field to the light of the firmament. It would not be possible to write that in painting and you have painted it in writing.—

You speak of Ruskin's *Poetry of Architecture*[3]—tell me, is there anything in it about cathedrals? Which ones? And these works you mention—do they speak even incidentally of cathedrals? Do you know anything about an essay of Ruskin's on flamboyant architecture on the banks of the Somme?[4]—

In another letter I'll tell you about Julian Edouard, whom I saw a month ago. But he shows only Saint-Ouen and not the cathedral. What did he say to you about Ruskin? He claims Ruskin told him Saint-Ouen was the most beautiful Gothic monument in the world, but in the *Seven Lamps* Ruskin calls it frightful![5]

Your respectful friend,

Marcel Proust

---

1 Cf. *Within a Budding Grove:* "Although it is rightly said that there can be no progress, no discovery in art, but only in the sciences, and that each artist starting afresh on an individual effort cannot be either helped or hindered therein by the efforts of any other, it must nonetheless be acknowledged that, in so far as art brings out certain laws, once an industry has taken those laws and popularized them, the art that was first in the field loses retrospectively a little of its originality . . . ." Toward the end of the novel the narrator comes back to this question and frames his mature judgment (*Time Regained*).

2 "Car le mot qu'on le sache est un être vivant" (*Les Contemplations*).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3 *The Poetry of Architecture: Giotto and His Work in Padua*; Proust saw Giotto's frescoes for himself when he visited Padua in May 1900, while he and his mother, as well as Mlle Nordlinger, were staying in Venice.

4 "The Flamboyant Architecture of the Valley of the Somme," a lecture delivered on 29 January 1868 at the Royal Institution.

5 On a visit to Rouen in February 1900, Proust was shown round the church of Saint-Ouen by the verger, Julian Edouard. That Ruskin had changed his mind about Saint-Ouen since 1849 is evidenced by his very severe criticism of the church in Appendix II of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*; even that, apparently, Proust had read.

To his mother

Saturday [evening 31 August 1901]

My dear little Mama,

"Misery of miseries or mystery of mysteries?" That's the title of a chapter in Dumas, which could apply to me at the present time. After writing to you yesterday, I was taken with uninterrupted asthma and flux, obliging me to walk doubled over, to stop in at every tobacconist's and light [anti-asthma] cigarettes, etc. And the worst of it is, I went to bed at midnight after long fumigations, and three or four hours later came the real summer attack, something quite unprecedented. That had never happened before, outside of my regular attacks . . . . Actually I'm fine this evening. At about half-past two in spite of all that, I had a meal consisting of two steaks, which I didn't leave a scrap of, a dish of fried potatoes (about twenty times as much as Félicie used to make), a portion of *fromage à la crème,* a piece of Swiss cheese, two croissants, a bottle of Pousset beer (I don't believe beer can give one albumen?).[1]

I wanted to stay home afterward to rest. But the Princesse de Polignac had sent word, asking me to go and see her at half-past six, and seeing I wasn't shaved I went out at about five, so as not to be rushed. She made me think of you, my poor little Mama, at Auteuil, wearing yourself out sitting up at night with me, when she told me about the nights she had spent with her husband and how they talked about Mark Twain at three in the morning.[2] She wanted to engage an English nurse to take care of him, but the woman got on his nerves and he kept sending her away, so there was nothing she could do but take her place. All Englishwomen looked alike to him, so when he saw the nurse with her little white collar, etc., he'd say to his wife: "I have nothing to say to the Princess of Wales at three o'clock in the morning." She told me that when she married him all those of his relations whom he called "the red-faced louts," the ones who didn't understand him, had told her she was marrying an unbearable crank—but that on the contrary she had never known anyone so easy to get on with, because he was so afraid of inconveniencing anybody. Her free-and-easy American ways upset him. He had reserved rooms in Amsterdam (because when he stayed in a hotel he made a note of the room numbers and their exposure, to be sure of having the same ones next time), so when he fell sick, she said: I must wire Amsterdam to tell them you won't want the rooms. To which he replied: "Oh yes, of course, you want to make me look like a flibbertigibbet. They'll think I had no intention of taking those rooms." And he had worn himself out writing eight pages to the manager of the hotel.—My slight oppression has passed completely in the course of this talk with you. I shall have a good night and shall probably spend the first days of the week in the country somewhere . . . .

With many kisses,

Marcel

1 Proust was to worry for years about albumen. In *The Guermantes Way,* when the narrator's grandmother tells Dr. du Boulbon that she has a little albumen, he replies: "You ought not to know anything about that."

2 Prince Edmond de Polignac had died on 8 August 1901.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

III

At the beginning of 1902 Proust was still translating Ruskin's *Bible of Amiens,* though his enthusiasm was waning and he was trying to decide how he could manage to write something on his own account. Although the *Jean Santeuil* project was virtually dead by now, Proust occasionally added a character sketch based on someone he met.

Toward the end of that year Proust was persuading Alfred Vallette to publish his translation of *The Bible of Amiens* at Editions Mercure de France. Vallette wanted a Ruskin anthology but turned down the *Bible*; Proust refused the one without the other, and Vallette gave in. Proust then arranged with his friend Constantin de Brancovan, editor of the periodical *La Renaissance latine,* to accept part of *The Bible of Amiens* for his review, played off publisher and editor one against the other to hurry them both into print, and was so successful in his tactics that he could not get his material ready by the times arranged.

He was becoming quite skilled at manipulating people, using a mixture of pathetic need, emotional blackmail, and a technique which consisted of making his exacting requirements quite clear while withdrawing from any responsibility for making what might be awkward requests. Yet his fundamental seriousness and the true power of his mind show clearly when the occasion calls them out, as in his letter about political action against the religious orders. The dominant Radicalism of the Third Republic was violently anti-clerical. A law of July 1901 asserted the control of the government over the religious orders, and when Emile Combes became Président du Conseil with responsibility for religious affairs he applied the law with the utmost rigor. Many religious institutions were closed, including a number of schools; diplomatic relations with the Holy See were broken off. All this was to lead to the annulling of Napoleon's Concordat in 1905, and the separation of Church and State. Proust forsaw a resultant change in the spiritual atmosphere of France, and set out his views in a remarkable letter to Georges de Lauris on July 29, 1903.

The year 1903 ended with the first of Proust's great family griefs. In November 1903 his father died suddenly of a stroke. As the eldest son, Proust was chief mourner at the national funeral. He thought of giving up his work on Ruskin, but his mother urged him on. He was, of course, more ambitious than he himself knew, and was eventually to realize his ambition. But that story is not yet. —*J. M. C.*

To Alfred Vallette[1]

45, rue de Courcelles
Monday [29 September 1902]

Dear Sir,

I stopped by *Le Mercure* about a month ago, but was not fortunate enough to find you there. Though I am fairly well now, it is not easy for me to go out in the daytime, and that is why I have not been able to try again. I left what information I was able to obtain with the editorial secretary.

Unto This Last sells for 3 francs 50 (I believe I said 3 francs, so I was 50 centimes off; anyway, I left the volume at *Le Mercure* and you can see for yourself). I compared the English text of *Unto This Last* with the English text of *The Bible of Amiens.* Since the latter is much longer, I believe (but is that an adequate reason?) that M. Beauchesne will price *The Bible of Amiens* much higher![2] Though perhaps you will say that my calculations are based on mere guesswork.

As for going to see Beauchesne and asking him how much *The Bible of Amiens* will cost, without even the pretext that it's the first volume announced (*Sesame and Lilies* is the first) I'm afraid that would be rather risky and put them on their guard.

Of course I shall do and say whatever you wish. But don't you think he would have to be half asleep not to smell a rat?

I shall probably take advantage of the improvement in my health to visit the exhibition of Primitives at Bruges. Since it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

closes on 5 October, I shall probably leave on Thursday if I decide to go,[3] and I don't think there is time for you to write me before then. But if on my return, which will be in a week no doubt, you could give me an answer about the *Bible,* I should be much obliged. Naturally if a delay would increase my chances of a favorable reply, I would rather you postponed your decision for a while. But otherwise I shall have to look for a publisher, and I had better not wait too long.

Yours faithfully,
Marcel Proust

1 Alfred Vallette (1858–1935), chief editor of the literary periodical *Le Mercure de France* and of the publishing house of the same name.

2 Editions Beauchesne et Cie, having published *Unto This Last,* had announced a series of translations of Ruskin's work. Proust was hoping that Editions Mercure de France would publish his own translation of *The Bible of Amiens.*

To Constantin de Brancovan

[Shortly before 24 November 1902]

Dear friend,

I have various things to ask you, and since I don't know when I shall be able to see you, I am writing you this short letter.

You have been kind enough to ask me for things of mine for *La Renaissance latine.*[1] I have thought of something which, while a response to your gracious request, might perhaps be more to the taste of your subscribers than my modest prose. I have just completed a translation of an admirable and essentially "Latin" book by Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens* (Latin, because it is the history of Christianity in Gaul and the Orient, explained by the Amiens cathedral). The book will be published I think by *Le Mercure,* in February or March, I suppose.[2] Because of the great interest I think it holds (I can say this because, aside from the translation, it is none of my doing) I was hoping to publish if not the whole of it, because there are dull passages, at least the greater part in a magazine. Would you like this magazine to be *La Renaissance latine*? This would be the first periodical publication of Ruskin. And I believe it would be of considerable interest to your readers. Tell me what you think and how long you think the installments should be.—

Something else. I know you are close to M. Bernstein. Would you happen to have seats you are not using for his *Joujou*? If so, I would be very glad to see it.[3] But of course this indiscreet question calls for an equally frank answer. It doesn't really matter much one way or the other.

I keep writing to Antoine [Bibesco] and never receive the ghost of an answer. I am tormented and sad at having no news of him. If you know anything, you would give me great pleasure by passing it on to me.

Affectionately yours,
Marcel Proust

1 The issue of *La Renaissance latine* for 15 November 1902 carries the name of Prince de Brancovan as editor-in-chief.

2 In fact Vallette was still hesitating over an offer of publication. Moreover, as usual Proust was too optimistic about the time it would take him to complete the work in hand; his translation did not appear in book form until 1904.

3 Proust did attend the dress rehearsal of Bernstein's *Joujou,* which took place at the Théâtre du Gymnase on 24 November 1902.

To Alfred Vallette

Thursday [27 November 1902]

Dear Sir,

I wrote to you on receiving the telegram you were kind enough to send me so promptly. But I am sure I forgot to post the letter, though I am quite unable to find it. So I don't know whether I may not have posted it without thinking. Anyway, I'm not sure, so just in case, I am going to repeat everything I said in it. I shall probably use the same terms. If you've

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

received my letter, please forgive the resemblances. If I could remember it accurately, I would manage to avoid repetition by saying the same thing in a different way . . . . [I]f whole sentences are the same, it will not as usual be because of too much, but because of too little, memory. So you don't want my poor *Bible of Amiens,* and I must confess that I fail to see why. Even if, as you say, it would be meaningless published by itself, such a publication would present no financial risk, since I would bear the costs,[1] and it would certainly not dishonor *Le Mercure.* For it is undoubtedly a beautiful work, apart from being curious and unknown. Can you really think *Le Mercure* would suffer by publishing a work by Ruskin, believed by many to be his finest? In saying this I am quite sincere, for out of all his works it is this one that I chose to translate. And if only one of Ruskin's works were to be translated, it is the *Bible* that should be published, even if it were not the finest. Because it is the only one that deals with France—at once the history of France, a French city, and French Gothic. If for no other reason than to enable the reader to verify and compare, since it is easier after all to go to Amiens than to Verona or Padua. And it is more relevant to our preoccupations. That is why the Société d'Edition Artistique wanted to begin its translations with this one.[2] I believe also that I once quoted to you the passage (which alarmed me at the time but which I invoke today) in a book by M. Brunhes, where he says that if any of Ruskin's books should arouse the interest of us French, it is *The Bible of Amiens,* the only one dealing with our history and our monuments.[3] And finally, as you know, Ruskin thought it eminently representative of his system.

I shall send someone to *Le Mercure* Monday morning. If all these arguments have not moved and convinced you, if your decision remains unchanged, don't trouble to reply, just give the messenger my manuscript: that will be the black sail of Theseus. —But then, like Moreau's woman bearing the *Head of Orpheus,* I shall have to embark on dreary wanderings in search of a shelter for the genius. And this duty seems so urgent that until it is accomplished I shall not be able to give you a reply about the Ruskin *pages choisies.* I have perused the only two books that have been written about Ruskin, and the quotations amount to so little that to tell the truth there would be hardly any overlap, which disposes of one of my objections. But the other holds good. Just the sort of book to dampen the enthusiasm his genius should arouse! In place of a living cathedral a cold museum full of odds and ends. It will make known the works in which he resembles other great writers, not those in which he differs.[4] In any case, I must first, even if I drop "Of Kings' Treasuries,"[5] find a home for the wandering and banished *Bible.* And if, citing itself, it can say to *Le Mercure*: "I knocked at your door and you did not let me in," imagine how it will be when I call on other publishers who are probably illiterate.

Forgive my insistence.

Yours faithfully,
Marcel Proust

---

1 In the contract eventually signed by Proust and Vallette on 26 February 1904 Proust was granted the usual royalties. He was later to make the same gesture, of offering to bear the cost of publication, in connection with *Swann*—with deplorable consequences.

2 The Artistic Publishing Company seems to have brought out only one volume (containing *The Crown of Wild Olive* and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*), in 1901, of a projected complete edition of Ruskin's works in translation, before going bankrupt sometime before 1904.

3 H. J. Brunhes, *Ruskin et la Bible: pour servir à l'histoire d'une pensée* (1901); the H. J. stood for Henriette and Jean, a wife-and-husband team.

4 Proust was later to express a very different opinion on the *Pages choisies,* which in the end he agreed to edit for Editions Mercure de France.

5 The title of the first essay in Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*—suggesting that Proust had already begun to translate that work.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To Antoine Bibesco[1]

Saturday [20 December 1902]

My dear little Antoine,

Every night before going to sleep I read your dear letters and fall asleep with sad but pleasant thoughts of you . . . .

[T]his so-called work I've taken up again—it plagues me for several reasons. Most of all, because what I'm doing at present is not real work, only documentation, translation, etc. It's enough to arouse my thirst for creation, without of course slaking it in the least. Now that for the first time since my long torpor I have looked inward and examined my thoughts, I feel all the insignificance of my life; a thousand characters for novels, a thousand ideas urge me to give them body, like the shades in the *Odyssey* who plead with Ulysses to give them a little blood to drink to bring them back to life and whom the hero brushes aside with his sword. I have awakened the sleeping bee and I feel its cruel sting far more than its helpless wings. I had enslaved my intelligence to my peace of mind. In striking off its fetters I thought I was merely delivering a slave, but I was giving myself a master whom I have not the physical strength to satisfy and who would kill me if I did not resist him. So many things are weighing on me! When my mind is wholly taken up with you. I never cease to think of you, and when I write to you I keep talking about myself. If my friendship can be of any comfort to you, then bear in mind that my constant sadness over your desolation has infinitely reinforced and magnified it.

Yours,
Marcel

1 Prince Antoine Bibesco (1878–1951), Romanian diplomat and playwright. He and his brother, Prince Emmanuel, were first cousins of the younger Brancovans. His mother had died at the end of October.

To Antoine Bibesco

[22–24 December 1902]

My dear little Antoine,

You say my telegram is unintelligible. What do you think of this one: "Received letters today sorry Asti i at 10 o'clock Munich will write una deco toi.—Antoine." (I enclose the original so you can give the telegraph office at Corcova a piece of your mind.) As for the one that came to you so absurdly garbled, it was: "You haven't answered me about Munich." It was written out in my best hand. But if you were in one particular place, how is it that you haven't received my two letters suggesting Munich (I said Munich as I might have said any place half-way between Paris and Corcova). And if your post was not forwarded, how is it that you didn't find my letters there before you wrote, and how is it that you don't tell me in your letter that you have just been away? If I still had the same suspiciously affectionate feelings toward you as in the old days—my grief over your misfortune has effaced them completely by making me incapable of any sorrow other than the sorrow it gives me to think of your sadness—what a splendid occasion for persecution mania all these coincidences would have offered me!

I would gladly give you an idea of what's going on, but I've been living entirely in my books. I had dinner yesterday at the Noailles's, where I dine fairly often. Apart from the usual company, young Guiche was there, a matter deserving of no special mention if Lucien [Daudet] had not been placed beside him, which had such an effect on Lucien that he talked in a steady stream, I'd never seen him so voluble, as joyful as Mme Bovary when she looked at herself in the mirror and cried out: "I have a lover, I have a lover!"[1] As for me, it made me sad to see him sitting so close to the bacillus (of snobbery), only too eager to succumb to the infection. But this is what happened (all this is strictly in confidence, a mere attempt to speak to you of something that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

isn't sad, *for I will never speak sadly to you again,* my poor boy): Lucien was convinced that if the Gramonts had stopped inviting him it was because of his brother (*Libre Parole* and the Duchesse née Rothschild).[2] This certainty overwhelmed him but at least it accounted for his not being invited. Toward the end of the dinner the innocent Guiche asked him: "Do you have a brother?" Lucien in his stupefaction would have liked to take advantage of this blessed ignorance, this *sancta simplicitas,* and say: "No, I haven't, and if you ever hear that a Daudet has said anything about the R[oths-child]s and the J[ew]s, it has nothing to do with me." But your implacable cousin had heard the question and looked straight at him. So that after a painful hesitation he replied: "Yes."

Another trifling anecdote. Gregh is getting married. The "Forsaken Woman," who had not yet been informed, was visiting Mme Baignères with a Mme Sichel (for your internal *Tout-Paris,* I add: Sichel-Dulong, widow of the dealer in Japanese artifacts, friend of the Goncourts, children died of tuberculosis).[3] Since illness had for some time prevented this Sichel woman from going out, she didn't know about the Forsaken Woman's liaison with the young Poet. She says: "I hear Gregh is getting married." Old Mme Baignères breaks out in a cold sweat, denies it, protests, tries to change the subject. Mme Sichel says: "Actually I was surprised to hear it, he's so ugly, bald, vulgar, etc." Renewed protestations from Mme Baignères. The Sichel woman begins floundering and finally says: "Well, anyway, I don't find him attractive"; (a silence); then, at last realizing her gaffe, she says in a loud, clear voice: "Not at least for a young girl!"

My brother's marriage has been brought forward to 2 February! It's intolerable!

Yours ever,
Marcel

P.S. Your brother has written me a letter so exquisite that I don't believe I have ever received one so involuntarily beautiful. I told the Noailles about it and they spoke of him with the most fervid praise.

I apologize for putting "tenderly" at the end of my telegram. That was idiotic. And your "affectionately" made me aware of it. Forgive me. When one feels that those one loves are sad, one hopes that affection will make them forget it.

---

1 Cf., Flaubert, *Madame Bovary,* part II, chapter 9. Armand Agénor Auguste Antoine, Duc de Guiche (1879–1962), was then twenty-three years old; Lucien Daudet was twenty-four.

2 Léon Daudet wrote for *La Libre Parole,* the self-styled "anti-Semitic and independent" daily; Guiche's mother, the Duchesse de Gramont, was a Rothschild by birth.

3 The *Journal des Débats* for 9 January 1903 announced the engagement of Fernand Gregh to Mlle Harlette Hayem, daughter of Mme Jules Comte and stepdaughter of the editor of the *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne. Tout-Paris* is a directory, "Who's Who in Paris." The "Forsaken Woman" is unidentified.

To Constantin de Brancovan

[Second half of January 1903]

Dear friend,

You know how fond I am of you. And especially at a time when you've been so good to me and my Ruskins, I don't like to seem to be finding fault with you—but I find it incredible that, knowing as you do that I've been working for four years on a translation of *The Bible of Amiens,*[1] that my translation is soon to be published, that it has given me a great deal of trouble and that I attach a great deal of importance to it—I find it incredible that knowing all this you should say to me in front of Lauris (or anyone else) as you did just now: "It must be full of mistakes, because you don't really know English." My dear Constantin, I'm sure you meant no harm. *But could someone who detested me and wanted with a few words to destroy the fruit of my four years' labor,* carried on in the midst of illness—I ask

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you—could someone who wanted my translation to be read by no one and utterly ignored, *have said anything worse?* Repeat only that to three people, and I might just as well not have spent a single one of the thousand (and how many more!) hours of work this book has cost me.—

As for the work itself, you know I'm not in the habit of over-rating my achievements or boring people with my productions. But I do believe—not because of my talent, which is negligible, but because of my conscientiousness, which is infinite—that this translation will be virtually unequaled, a veritable reconstruction. If you knew that for every ambiguous expression, every obscure phrase, I have consulted at least ten English writers and amassed a whole file of correspondence, you would not speak of "mistakes." And by delving into the meaning of every word, the implications of every turn of phrase, and the connections between ideas, I acquired so precise a knowledge of this text that when I consulted an Englishman—or a Frenchman well versed in English—about some difficulty, he usually took an hour to detect the difficulty and congratulated me on knowing English better than an Englishman. In that he was mistaken. I don't know a word of spoken English and I don't read English easily. But having worked on *The Bible of Amiens* for four years, I know it entirely by heart, and it has become so nearly assimilated, so transparent to me, that I am able to see not only the nebulosities resulting from the inadequacy of my scrutiny but also those resulting from the irreducible obscurity of the thought itself. On more than a score of sentences d'Humières[2] said to me: "That is impossible to translate, the English is meaningless. If it were up to me, I'd skip it." In the end, by dint of patience, I found meaning even in those sentences. And if there are still any mistakes in my translation, it is in the clear and simple passages, for the obscure ones have been meditated, scrutinized and reworked over a period of years.[3]—

Telling you all this, dear friend, is hardly in my character. I don't believe I have ever in all my life talked so much about myself to anyone. But your injustice made me rather angry, and I was rather frightened at the possible consequences of your words for me. When you see Antoine Bibesco, ask him if he thinks I have a good understanding of Ruskin's text. He has often seen me hesitating over a meaning when he thought there was no room for doubt. And then, listening to my explanations, he saw that there was a basis for my doubt. And when he saw how I finally resolved the problem, he would say: *"I wouldn't have thought it possible to translate anyone so well."* It's a bit ridiculous giving you all these references, but isn't it necessary? And yet, if you were to ask me in English for something to drink, I would not understand you, because I learned English when I had asthma and couldn't talk, I learned with my eyes and am unable to pronounce the words or to recognize them when pronounced by others. I don't claim to know English. I claim to know Ruskin. And you know that I haven't many pretensions. Perhaps you are still convinced of the contrary and believe my translation to be a series of absurdities. But in that case, do refrain out of friendship for me from telling anyone, let the reader find out for himself. Forgive my frankness and believe in my grateful affection.

Marcel Proust

P.S. The corrected proofs are with my concierge. I have nothing more to change. But if your magazine usually sends two sets of proofs, I can read the second proof to make sure my corrections have been fully understood. (When I say "nothing more to change," I believe that to be the case.) But of course I shall change anything you want me to.—Still, I am afraid we shall lower Ruskin in the reader's esteem and detract from his strange charm if we turn him into some sort of Mérimée.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1 In fact he had begun work on the translation in October 1899, a little more than two years before.

2 Vicomte Robert-Aymeric-Eugène d'Humières (1868–1915), translator of Kipling. Proust had known him since 1895 and consulted him on his Ruskin translations.

3 There is no lack of mistakes in Proust's version of *The Bible of Amiens,* of which his mother supplied him with a rough translation that he then proceeded to polish. Yet much of what he says here is true, and his translation of *Sesame and Lilies* would be impeccable.

To Georges de Lauris[1]

[Tuesday evening 12 May ? 1903]

Dear Friend,

I am exhausted after two days not only without sleep but without going to bed. I can't make up my mind to lie down! Before finally closing my eyes, which are full of sand, as children say, I cast them a last time at the singular personage I was with this afternoon,[2] and I here submit to you the (very uncertain) lines of a portrait I might draw if I were not so tired.

Though it is difficult, what with his doubly hereditary stupidity, to disentangle the slender imbecility of the Parisian from the heavy stupidity of the Eskimo, he looks at first sight and at a distance like a distinguished young man patiently cut out of sealskin for some exhibition of the products of the Urals, all in all a rather competent imitation. His eyes have, if I may say so, a kind of superficial depth, an apparent sparkle, a squint suggestive of independence, a myopia that gives an impression of concentration, and are to two thinking eyes what the mottled plaster of a slum stairway is to a Byzantine mosaic. But crude as it is, this *trompe-l'oeil* rather fools one at a few yards' distance, and one is tempted to say, as in the presence of certain animals or in a waxworks museum: If only it could speak. If the eyes are those of a thinker, the nose is that of a royalist dandy. This nose bristles, bridles, rebels, declares its independence, it is the nose of a moujik, broad and flat; it wants to be the nose of a patrician. It is a nose that has distinction and poise, that aspires to arrogance; it is an eccentric, waggish nose that parts company with the rest of the face (here a few lines that might be more easily spoken than written). I ought to tell you that some months ago, conscious of its importance and of its independent existence, this nose decided it could afford the luxury of a large pimple all its own, which would gleam complacently on its flank, like a castle on a hillside or the purpure on an escutcheon. And he placed it on the left, slightly to the side of the tip, in the Russian style.[3] This young man is articulated, his head nods, his shoulders shrug; his frock coat is insolent and his jacket offhand. He says "grandma" and "papa" with the shade of respect one owes to a cocotte or an Academician. He also says "Good day, Monsieur So-and-so" and "Goodbye, Monsieur So-and-so" and can, if one doesn't make him talk at the same time, put on an expression at once clever and good-natured. Still, one has to be some distance away from this sealskin young man; for he is like those dolls which, seen at a distance, smile, but on closer scrutiny seem to be making faces or spitting sawdust. My dear friend, I'm at the end of my strength, I can't go on with this beautiful sketch. [*Illegible*] then burn it ***immediately and for ever.***

Yours,
Marcel

1 Comte Georges-Alfred de Lauris (1876–1963) had a doctorate in law; he published a novel and critical essays.

2 Apparently Henry de Vogüé, son of the Vicomte Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, (1850–1910), author of a once-famous book, *Le Roman russe* (The Russian Novel). Henri de Régnier speaks in his memoirs of the unhappiness which the "imbecile" son caused the Academician father. The younger de Vogüé seems to have picked a quarrel with Proust at a soirée at Mme Lemaire's on May 12, 1903.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3 Cf. Proust's portrait of the Marquis de Cambremer in *Cities of the Plain*: "By a transposition of the senses, M. de Cambremer looked at you with his nose. This nose of his was not ugly; it was if anything too handsome, too bold, too proud of its own importance. Arched, polished, gleaming, brand-new, it was amply prepared to make up for the spiritual inadequacy of the eyes. Unfortunately, if the eyes are sometimes the organ through which our intelligence is revealed, the nose (whatever the intimate solidarity and the unsuspected repercussion of one feature on another), the nose is generally the organ in which stupidity is most readily displayed."

To Georges de Lauris

[Wednesday evening 29 July 1903]

Dear friend,

Since Albu left, I have been thinking some more about your blasted laws, and in a state of incredible depression and dullness (perhaps inseparable from the position I am going to defend) I am setting down my humble little reflections, the product at best of common sense, on a level very much inferior to those of Yves Guyot and, I venture to say, to that at which our discussions on this subject have hitherto been carried on.[1] So tear this letter up straight away, I blush at the thought that someone else might read it. Until now I have thought only of the virtues and dangers of Christianity, of its right to existence and freedom. But now I shall try to get down to the substance of your laws and what they may mean to you; I simply fail to see what you want. To make *one* France (as your subsidiary ideas on Saint-Cyr,[2] which are too specialized for me to discuss, seem to suggest)? I do not think you want all Frenchmen to be alike, a dream that is fortunately stupid, because it is unrealizable. But I trust that you do want all Frenchmen to be friends, or at least, setting aside the special and individual reasons they may have for hating one another, capable of being so, and accordingly that you hope that no a priori enmity will ever, in any situation, pervert the course of justice, as happened some years ago. And you believe that free schools teach their pupils to hate Freemasons and Jews (this evening indeed it was education more than anything else that seemed to arouse your anger after Albu left, to the point of making you doubt my good faith in the matter of Cochin, etc.).[3] And it is true that in the past few years those educated at such schools have ceased to admit Jews to their social circle—a fact which in itself doesn't trouble us, but is a sign of the dangerous state of mind to which the [Dreyfus] Affair, etc. gave rise. But I must tell you that at Illiers, a village at whose school prize-giving ceremony my father presided the day before yesterday, the priest has not been invited to the prize-giving since Ferry's laws.[4] The pupils are taught to look upon all who associate with that priest as persons to be avoided, so that this camp just as much as the other does its best to create two Frances. And I, who remember this little Beauce village, where all eyes are turned toward the niggardly earth, mother of avarice, where the sole striving toward the sky, sometimes mottled with clouds but often divinely blue and every evening at sunset transfigured, where the only striving toward the sky remains that of the church's pretty steeple —I, who remember the village priest, who taught me Latin and the names of the flowers in his garden—I, who above all know the mentality of my father's brother-in-law,[5] the anti-clerical deputy mayor, who hasn't spoken to the priest since the "Decrees," who reads *L'Intransigeant* but who since the Affair has taken also to reading *La Libre Parole*—I don't think it's right to have stopped inviting the old priest to the prize-giving, since in the village he stands for something more difficult to define than the social function symbolized by the pharmacist, the retired tobacco-monopoly engineer and the optician, but which is every bit as worthy of respect, if only because of the intelligence of the pretty, spiritualized steeple, which points toward the setting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sun and melts so lovingly into its pink clouds and which I am sure, to the stranger arriving in the village, looks finer, nobler, more disinterested, more intelligent, and, what we want most of all, more loving, than any of the other buildings, including those decreed by the most recent laws. In any case the gulf between your two Frances is deepened by every new development of anti-clerical policy. Which is quite natural. True, you can say this in reply: If you have a tumor and go on living with it, in order to remove it I am obliged to make you very ill; I'll give you a fever, you'll need a period of convalescence, but afterward at least you'll be well. That was how I reasoned during the Affair. So if I believed that once the teaching orders were eliminated the ferment of hatred among Frenchmen would be eliminated with them, I should consider it a very good thing to do. But I believe exactly the opposite. For one thing, it is only too obvious that what we can legitimately detest in clericalism, first of all anti-Semitism, and clericalism itself for that matter, represent a complete break with Catholic dogma. It seems to me that we should not generalize on the basis of radical anti-Semites like Humbert[6] and Cavaignac. And tolerant priests, even if they're not exactly Dreyfusard, strike me as tolerable precisely in so far as they are tolerant. Today (and it is the shame of Catholicism to have accepted their support, but don't forget that we accepted [Degoulet-] Gohier and how many more *evil* men, anti-Semites at bottom) the mainstays of the Catholic faction (Barrès, etc.) are not believers. And the clericals don't mind. Because they know that a village priest, a monk, a bishop, a Pope, can make his peace with the government, but that an editor of *La Libre Parole* cannot. And they give full absolution to those who stay away from church (except on the days when Charbonnel[7] shows up), who insult practically the whole clergy, from the Pope on down. Once the orders are gone and Catholicism dead in France (if it could die, but its ideas and beliefs are not killed by laws, they die when their content of truth and social utility is corrupted or diminished), there will be just as many clericals—clerical unbelievers—more rabidly anti-Semitic, anti-Dreyfusard, and anti-liberal than ever, and they will be a hundred times worse. Moreover, it's not teachers, even bad ones, who shape young people's opinions (except for those who go on to higher education and become equally fervent followers of a Boutroux or even of a Lavisse, regardless of whether they are products of Stanislas or of Condorcet);[8] it's the press. If it were possible to restrict the freedom of the press, rather than of education, the ferments of division and hatred might be somewhat diminished. But *intellectual protectionism* (and the present laws are a form of Mélinism a hundred times more odious than Méline)[9] would also have its drawbacks. And thus far we have been speaking only of the other camp, of those who hate us. But what about ourselves? Have we the right to hate? And is one France to mean not the union of all Frenchmen but the domination, etc. (I won't go on). Take an example in which there is no hatred, on the contrary a good-natured little joke of yours and Bertrand's. When Bertrand laughs at the idea of nuns "obliged to travel," when you are annoyed at seeing a cleric reading *La Libre Parole,* really your state of mind, though not exactly hateful, is not appreciably different from that of an amiable officer who is annoyed at seeing a Jew in a railway carriage reading *L'Aurore* when he is himself reading *La Libre Parole.* Minds that will never open have *L'Echo* or *L'Eclair* as their teacher, these are the newspapers of their social group, which in turn feed and form their conversation and ideas, if such words are applicable to them. Whereas the opening mind has a Sorbonne professor (or an abbé with *modern ideas*) as its teacher, and then regardless of whether it belongs to a Fénelon, a Radziwill, a Lauris, a Gabriel de la Rochefoucauld, a Guiche (I purposely choose persons of very unequal intelligence), or simply Marcel Proust, their ideas will be similar (and so for that matter will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those of the most advanced Catholics.) Rest assured, the fact that a *licence* in literature is required for military service has done more for the cause of the advanced liberal Republic than any expulsion of monks. The rest of us, those who haven't been to university, Paris, Albu, [Muller],[10] stick to the political ideas of their social group, that is, *of their newspapers.* All this, of course, barely skims the surface of the question. And it's not as simple as you think. For instance, we speak—I do, and so does Albu—very lightly of the Jesuits. But if we were better educated, certain facts about the Jesuits would give us food for thought, and most particularly, that Auguste Comte, whom General André[11] admires, but his knowledge of whom is probably not as complete as it might be, had such admiration for the Jesuit order and was so strongly convinced that nothing of any moment could be done in France without its help, that he arranged a meeting with the General of the order to discuss the possibility of merging the school of Positivism and the order of Jesuits into a single organization. The General of the order was suspicious and the negotiations fell through. We are constantly told that the absolute monarchies could not tolerate the Jesuits. But is this so much to the Jesuits' discredit? Even so, I think I'd be against them in the last analysis, though I wish at least that anti-clericals would draw a few distinctions and look closely at the great social edifices they want to demolish before setting to work on them. I don't care for the Jesuit spirit. But just the same there's a Jesuit philosophy, a Jesuit art, a Jesuit pedagogy. Will there ever be an anti-clerical art? All this is far from as simple as it looks. What is the future of Catholicism in France and in the world, I mean, how long and in what forms will its influence endure—this is a question one can't even ask, because Catholicism is engaged in a process of growth and transformation, and since the eighteenth century, when it seemed to be the last refuge of ignoramuses, it has acquired, even among those who combatted and resisted it, an influence that no one could have foreseen in the last century. Even from the standpoint of anti-Christianity, the distance traveled from Voltaire to Renan (traveled in the direction of Catholicism) is immense. True, Renan is still an anti-Christian, but a Christianized one: "*Graecia capta,* or rather *Christianismus captus ferum victorem cepit.*"[12] The century of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Tolstoy, even if it was the century of Hugo, even if it was the century of Renan (and I'm not even saying that it should also be regarded as the century of Lamartine and Chateaubriand) is not an anti-religious century. Baudelaire himself is tied to the Church, at least by sacrilege. In any case this has nothing to do with the question of the Christian schools. First of all, because closing the Christian schools will not kill the Christian spirit, if it is doomed to die it will perish even under a theocracy. And secondly, because the Christian spirit and even Catholic dogma have nothing to do with the partisan spirit which we want to destroy (and which we imitate).

Exhausted, I shake your hand and adjure you to burn this idiotic letter immediately.

Yours ever,
Marcel Proust

Yes, I would be beside myself if anyone saw this inept letter.

As for Denys Cochin (I'm not speaking of Aynard, who is an admirable man, a great mind),[13] he must, I presume, be thoroughly infected with conservatism, reaction and clericalism. Since he speaks admirably and expresses ideas that appeal to me, and is especially liberal at the present time because he quite naturally desires nothing but freedom (just as we spoke only of justice and love at a time when we were asking only for an act of justice and love), his speeches delight me. I wouldn't go so far as to offer him a cabinet post. But a ministry supported by him would frighten me no more, though I am very progressive, than in 1898 M. de Witt, though a royalist, was frightened by a ministry supported by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

collectivists.[14] For the pressing need then was to correct the injustices of the General Staff, while today it is to correct the injustices of the government, if we do not want a formidable party to rise up against us with the power of growth characteristic of parties swollen by Justice (Dreyfusard socialism, for instance). At the present time the socialists make the same mistake by being anti-clerical as in '97 the clericals did by being anti-Dreyfusard. They are expiating today. We shall expiate tomorrow.

---

1 ". . . One evening," recalled Lauris, "I defended the Combes anti-clerical laws. I believe I did so not in opposition to Marcel but to someone else who was present" (*A un ami,* 23). The someone else was clearly Louis d'Albufera. Justin Louis Emile Combes (1835–1921) was Premier of France (1902–5). Yves Guyot (1843–1928), economist and publicist, former Minister, was the political editor of *Le Siècle.* He was a partisan of freedom and free trade, and opposed to socialism.

2 The leading French military academy, corresponding to Sandhurst or West Point.

3 In France in 1903 the overwhelming majority of "free schools"—i.e., schools not operated by the State—were operated by the Catholic Church. Denys Cochin (1851–1922), conservative deputy from Paris, was opposed to the radically anti-clerical Combes.

4 Ferry's "Laws" or "Decrees," sponsored by Jules Ferry (1832–93), then Minister of Education, and promulgated on 29 March 1880, called for the dissolution of the teaching order of Jesuits.

5 Jules Amiot, owner of a haberdashery at Illiers, married Elisabeth Proust, Professor Proust's sister, in 1847.

6 Alphonse Humbert (1844–1922), journalist contributing to the right-wing papers *L'Eclair, Le Petit Parisien, L'Intransigeant,* etc., deputy 1893–1902.

7 Victor Charbonnel (1863–1926), priest and publicist, who left the Church in 1897 and gave a series of anti-clerical lectures.

8 The historian Ernest Lavisse (1842–1922) had resigned his teaching post at Saint-Cyr in order to retain his freedom of expression over the Dreyfus and Picquart affairs. The Collège Stanislas is a Catholic institution, while the Lycée Condorcet is a state school.

9 Jules Méline (1838–1925), deputy, then senator, and Premier 1896–98. A leader of the Progressive Republican Party, he advocated economic protectionism and opposed revision of the Dreyfus case.

10 Vicomte François de Pâris (1875–1958), member of the Jockey Club and the Yacht Club. The third name is illegible; Proust may mean Maurice Muller, member of the Automobile Club.

11 General Louis André (1838–1913), Minister of War 1901–4.

12 "Conquered Greece—or rather conquered Christianity—has conquered the victorious barbarians."

13 Edouard Aynard (1837–1913), deputy, defender of liberal ideas, member of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques.

14 Conrad de Witt (1824–1909), agronomist, deputy from the Calvados department 1885–1902, the only right-wing deputy to vote for revision of the Dreyfus case.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I am alone": Le Corbusier, bathrooms, and airplanes

by William H. Jordy

A suitcase found in a closet in Le Corbusier's Paris apartment at 24 rue Nungesser-et-Coli after his death contained seventy-three sketchbooks neatly ordered. They include a mélange of sketches and notes: on designs in progress (not only for architecture, but for paintings and sculpture as well), travel observations, rough drafts or outlines for writings or talks, diagrammatic plans for exhibitions, vituperations against those who crossed him, and philosophical musings—all mixed with the jottings of daily routine: telephone numbers, appointments, things to be bought, things to be done. He referred to the sketchbooks as "une chose active." They are a fascinating record of the day-to-day actions and thoughts of genius on the run, often telegraphic and fragmentary in brusque memoranda and scribbled notation; they also show Le Corbusier grasping a moment free of pressure for rumination and for making elaborate drawings of things seen or imagined.

The handsome four-volume publication of these pocket sketchbooks, the joint enterprise of the Fondation Le Corbusier, which owns them, and the Architectural History Foundation, reproduces each one of the four thousand and thirty-nine pages on which there is so much as a single word or tentative sketch.[1] Those in color appear in color. Printed captions in French beside each page make Le Corbusier's scrawl legible. These are, in turn, supplemented by English translations at the front of each volume, and by admirably terse but informative introductions to the contents and context of each of the sketchbooks by Françoise de Franclieu.

At last, we are privileged to participate in this *chose active* which, although often visible to Le Corbusier's collaborators on the site, he tended to keep pretty much to himself during his lifetime. As early as 1952, however, there is a reference in one of the sketchbooks to the possibility of publishing them. Some time later, with an assistant, he began ordering them chronologically. To his handwritten labeling of the cover of each sketchbook with its date and principle contents (not always completely accurate, because he sometimes returned to sketchbooks partially filled) he added more imperious cataloging by stamping each with the kind of bold stenciled font used on shipping crates. He favored such stenciled letters for identification, doubtless for their ambiguity as items both read and also intensely experienced as objects-in-themselves. For undiscernable reasons the letters A to T organize the sketchbooks in a sequence of series of various lengths. Numbers beneath run continuously from "A-1" to "[T]-70" (the last

1 *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks*, preface André Wogenscky, introduction Maurice Besset, notes Françoise de Franclieu. The Architectural History Foundation with the MIT Press in collaboration with the Fondation Le Corbusier, 1981-1982, 4 vols., approx. 2,000 pp., 4,039 illus., many in color, $500

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

actually only showing a "70" scratched in pen in a crude approximation of stenciling). Three more sketchbooks, initially overlooked, but inserted into the grand scheme with "bis" numbers, bring the total to 73. There are gaps. The volumes open with a sketchbook for 1914, although Le Corbusier presumably began to use such pocket notebooks as early as 1907. Moreover, none exist for the important years 1919-1929 or 1936-1945. Two, which were with Le Corbusier in his cabin at Cap Martin overlooking the Mediterranean when he went for his fatal swim in 1965, were filched. Others may be missing. But fragmentary as the record is, the rows of sketchbooks from his suitcase nevertheless illuminate the interplay between daily incident and creative act in Le Corbusier's career and with an immediacy that is unparalleled for any other major twentieth-century architect.

Le Corbusier would have approved of the way in which the image of each sketchbook, photographed to actual size, provides its own laconic introduction. The series of battered artifacts appears as though lifted one by one from the suitcase—abraded, foxed, creased, bent to the body. Laconic fact was always Le Corbusier's starting point. The first sketchbooks are covered with cardboard, a cloth spine and perforated pages. In 1930, the initial spiral binding appears and soon thereafter takes over. With his enthusiasm for the machined entity, he must have welcomed the metallic spiral and the literalism of this kind of sketchpad, which is quite bluntly asserted as a pile of drawing paper protected by cardboard covers.

Browsing through the sketchbooks calls forth a spectrum of themes, any one of which ramifies in unexpected ways. Consider, for example, a subject so important to Le Corbusier's theory as modern technology. It was Le Corbusier who attacked traditional eclectic architecture of the 1920s by asserting that the modern house, properly considered, should be "a machine for living in." He put forward this idea in articles in *L'Esprit Nouveau* (which he edited with the Purist painter Amedée Ozenfant in the early Twenties) and popularized it in the bundling of these articles in *Vers une architecture* (1922), which was destined to become the single most influential volume on architectural theory in the twentieth century. He dismissed as having "eyes that do not see" those whose interest fixed on columns, pilasters, metopes, swags, and the rest of what he regarded as the irrelevant baggage of traditional architecture, instead of such "modern" artifacts as ocean liners, automobiles, and airplanes. He dotted his staccato text with images of current transportation machinery, so that glazed eyes might begin to see.

From such an enthusiast one might expect to find many allusions to this aspect of modernity in the sketchbooks. But it does not appear in the way that one anticipates. Although the period of Le Corbusier's greatest exhilaration with the machine is missing from the sketchbooks, the years from 1919 to 1929, one expects more. True, he is impressed with the flock of dock cranes in Rotterdam during a visit in 1931: "to our Dutch friends," he writes in a sketchbook, "put your school of architecture in the harbor on an old steamer." Harbors and steamships are endlessly fascinating to him. Skyscrapers attract both praise and blame. As might be expected, he is least kind toward what he regarded as the desecration of his design for the United Nations Secretariat (his preliminary scheme was turned over to the American Wallace Harrison for development): "the morguish light behind the blue glazing of the UN skyscraper; air-conditioned in the middle of August. [The] artificial everywhere, away from the conditions of nature." He occasionally notices what used to be called "good design" in such items as modern outdoor lighting standards. He wants to export them to Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab in northern India that he is building. The Bhakra Dam is one of his design projects at Chandigarh, but, traveling in Spain in 1931, he voices his concern: "Watch out for Electricity—progress: destroyers of a people

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who are in a state of sublime equilibrium unique in the world today." His regard for modern technology is only occasionally evident throughout the sketchbooks, and when it does appear it is edged with skepticism.

For one who is often vulgarly understood as wedded to a standardized, mechanized world, Le Corbusier can more frequently be found in the sketchbooks taking the opposite tack. "Oh sociologists of minimal housing," he asks, "why don't you study the stages of the minimum heart?" Following a lecture in Sweden, he recalls his response to a question from the audience: "'Funktionelle!' Here it is, Messieurs . . . . OK, sure, sure! But what do you want to tell me? About laundry-lists, or about the heart?" On an early trip to the Netherlands, he had been impressed by the "total harmony" evident in the use of its land, but returning in 1958 it seems depressingly "Funktionelle . . . . constipated, finished. There is nothing left to do but die . . . . paradise (of imbeciles): we'll be happy (we're not going to have a lot of fun! we'll sing psalms, with our tits sagging to our knees) Amen!" It is the United States that really draws his wrath for its "disproportion" in everything. It "floods the world with its stupidity and *human mediocrity.*" None too happy anyway at having been held in New York overnight because of plane trouble, he looks from the bus carrying him to the airport in the glum "morning twilight, at the gloominess of the idiotic skyscrapers, then the *modern* ones, the 'post-UN' ones, smooth, sharp, sad, stupid, enormous, a gigantic and multiplied texture, void of spirit. These people *feel* nothing. They live '*modern,*' a brutalizing life."

So Le Corbusier's attitude toward the standardized, mechanized aspects of modern life is far from one of automatic approval. But then the careful reader of *Vers une architecture* knows as much. If, in the Twenties, Le Corbusier rated the work of the modern engineer over that of the common architect, it was because the engineer showed the way to the "new spirit." It was the architect imbued with this spirit who would ultimately "touch the heart." Two aspects of the modern world, however, do engage him repeatedly in the sketchbooks: bathrooms (along with other tiny spaces that are elaborately equipped) and airplanes.

In a *wagon-lit* in 1928 he drew a quick sketch plan of the compartment, using his sketchbook to measure its length: "8 times this sketchbook . . . . All the hardware is superb." On another occasion, "Sleeping-cars 'Train bleu' July 19, 1956," he measures adjacent doors of sleeping compartments for the kinds of clearances they provide to the passageway, and to one another. In Bogotá he measures a room in the Hilton-Sheraton sort of hotel, together with its furnishings. He is pleased by it efficient compactness. He measures as well the Hotel Janpath in New Delhi, designed by an American, and the Hotel Khayam in Baghdad. Aboard the *Vernon S. Hood* he draws the stateroom fittings and toilet; aboard the *Etoile de Mer,* the stateroom and its wall lamps, which impress him for their neat fit and flexibility. He sketches a toilet and bathtub at the Hotel Plaza in Brussels. "Constellation October 27, 1951/the toilet + sink are astonishingly comfortable with their small dimensions + lighting/the sink basins of stainless steel . . . I must at all costs get drawings of this equipment." In a similar vein: "Delhi-Bombay plane at 10:15-10:30 in the morning/We are flying over very beautiful country . . . Write to Bhabha Tata who supplies *hardware* for Air India planes (WC lock/hooks/aluminum/lamps etc." At "16 nov 57 Luynes [Touraine] chez Martin" he sketches all the modern bathroom equipment at the house where he is staying. And again, staying with José Luis Sert in Cambridge at the start of his work on the Carpenter Visual Center at Harvard, he sketches and measures the bathroom. Visiting Pierre Jeanneret's quarters in India, where Jeanneret was assisting his cousin at Chandigarh, he draws the stand-up WC with footprints on its oval orifice, and the sitz-bath tub with an enclosure so high as to make it something of a seat in a tiny cell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As fascinated as Le Corbusier was with bathrooms, one might expect that he would have been quite as concerned with the kitchen, that other domestic room which was so rapidly undergoing mechanization and modernization during the period. But not at all: no kitchen attracts his ruler, nor does any kitchen equipment call up the sketches so often inspired by the anatomical implications of bathroom equipment. Not only did the anatomical overtones of the bathroom attract Le Corbusier, but also its implications of solitude and contemplation. The kitchen makes no such appeal.

If the sketchbooks show his rapt examination of the modern cell, with its elaborate services shoehorned to fit, they also show his continuous interest in the subsistence cell. He recalls his youthful tour of Italy in 1907, when he was enamoured of the visual distinctness of the monks' cells ranged around three sides of a court at the Monastery of Ema (Charterhouse of Galluzzo) near Certosa. These cells were to have a profound effect on his work. There is the ovoid cell for meditation and study in the Ozenfant studio of the early Twenties, hung up in a corner of the studio and reached by a metal ladder-stair similar to those used for servicing machinery (the place for action complemented by the place for contemplation). There are the images of airplane cockpits in *Vers une architecture.* There is the furniture-like apartment building in Marseilles, his Unité d'Habitation, standing on squat legs and receiving the apartment units as (in his own images) drawers pushed into a dresser or bottles into a rack. And, to come full circle, there is his Monastery of La Tourette at Evreux, near Lyon, with its cornice of monks' cells.

In the sketchbooks the cell that receives his principal attention is his own cabin for retreat at Cap Martin. The project as a whole consists of a series of small cabin-like living units climbing a precipitous rise out of the Mediterranean on the Côte d'Azur—an Unité tilted, so to speak, to let the drawers fall out in a terraced rectangle. (They would be "condominiums" today; in fact, this densely packed community, where each cell is separately expressed, as in Le Corbusier's ideal monastery, is the prototypical condominium.) Above this sloping and stepped field of densely packed units he built a cabin for himself. It was close by but in a superior position, and alone. A number of pages in the sketchbooks are devoted to this cell of wood and rough stone, and to studies of its spartan, built-in cupboards, wall lamps, and furniture meticulously Modulored, according to his patented scheme of harmonic measurements, to the limited space. He twists the WC on a forty-five-degree angle, with its reservoir hung on the exterior wall of the house outside the bathroom, the better to make compact the arrangement inside. He asks his builder to find him a wall-hanging hospital basin, "small model."

"I am a loner desiring silence, a great worker. I am seen nowhere." So he confides at one point. Even when the occasion is one of mingling, as when he received an honorary degree at Cambridge in 1959, he shows himself isolated. "CAROLUM EDUARDUM LE CORBUSIER" introduces the occasion, and below this simply "(!)," then ground plans of the winding procession and of the platform, with Le Corbusier's seat indicated by a fat dot in relation to the Chancellor's, and two views of the procession. One of these shows the mace-bearers and Chancellor striding before him, all others receiving honorary degrees behind in a bunch led by Henry Moore. He marches alone and centered—positioned like the cabin at Cap Martin. From a window above the procession, a figure pops out, arms akimbo, crying "à bas l'Académie!!"

The second pervasive theme of modernity in the sketchbooks is even more emphatically centered in modern technology: the airplane. Here again technology leads him to search for the ways in which the machine can be integrated into human experience, an integration out of which, he believes, the only authentic modern culture can come.

Le Corbusier seems never to have lost

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that initial sense of the romance of the airplane. "Beirut January 6, 1959, airport," Le Corbusier writes, ". . . the planes =*shining* aluminum *silvery* colors (= bright, luminous, optimistic) the flags and signs are painted in full strength: Blue white red Holland/Green white-orange Indian." There is real passion in his enthusiasm for the airport, and an odd exuberance, considering the date. He goes on to speculate about the use of "gleaming aluminum finely riveted" and "bold coloring" for the Bhakra dam and powerhouse. At Palim airport in New Delhi in the spring he notes, "The airplanes in the flowers." Why not an airport with flowers? "The total runway/the flowers/the impeccable airplanes/the macadam/the sea/the flowers." The terse oscillation in Le Corbusier's thought here, between the poetics of nature and those of the machine, is characteristic. He is more hard-headed in another airport: "*Nice* July 24, 1954. How about proposing to Air France to let Corbu outfit an airplane." On several occasions he sketches the clip-on interiors of the planes in which he is flying, and he studies the compactness and refinements of their hardware and bathrooms.

In fact, the themes of cell and sky are intimately linked. The cabin for solitude and meditation that he most frequently mentions in the sketchbooks is his seat in the plane. He is on one of his many trips to Chandigarh, with other stops along the way. "[By] Plane 2½ hours Paris Rome/4½ Rome Cairo/9 Cairo Bombay/3¾ Bombay Delhi . . . I am arriving in Delhi." Most would feel wilted; not Le Corbusier. "I have never been so relaxed and so alone, engrossed in the poetry of things (nature) and poetry pure and simple (Apollinaire's *Alcools* and Gide's *Anthologie*) and meditation." "*Airplane 6:15 PM* Paris *time* . . . these first six hours in Flight have been a paradise. I am *alone* (with myself) *free* . . . . I read, I think, they offer me whiskey: one, then two. I am free, no one nor any thing is bugging me." The mood is momentarily broken when he fishes from his luggage an article critical of Chandigarh written by "cretins," but the mood returns as he watches the sun set and stars begin to appear. "I am on the Paris Bombay plane, 8 o'clock in the evening, having left Paris at 2:00 PM." How he marks the time! "I am in a state of perfect equilibrium, perfect serenity, almost elation . . . And here I am in Paradise, in the air like a bird . . . ." On a flight from Paris to Geneva, he is immersed in the "calm sea Heaven! limpidity, Fluid Simplicity. Immanence! Below, down there? Filthiness, conflicts, disputes, hatred, antagonism." But there is an hour to go, time to read Gide's *Thesée,* "to change atmospheres. To be young again!!" All too soon it is over. He has landed, once more, "down below." On an Ahmedabad to Bombay flight, he muses wryly, "Corbu is all over the world, traveling, his dirty raincoat on his arm, his leather satchel stuffed with business papers, with razor and toothbrush, brilliantine for a few hairs, and his suit from Paris, a temperate place, which clothes him here in Tokyo or in Ahmedabad (without the vest) . . . Arriving at night, at dawn or at noon . . . and guys [waiting for me] at the airport—my helpers . . . but having seen and contemplated things from on high." On a Paris to Delhi flight in 1955 he whiles away part of the time by listing all the cities he has known. At the bottom "= 110."

While in the solitude of flight, he not only organizes correspondence and schedules but also outlines books and plans exhibitions. He reads widely in the classics—especially his constant companions, Cervantes and Rabelais. "My travel readings always begin with Don Quixote . . . I open to any page and I'm bitten, I'm hooked . . . And it always ends with this darned Rabelais . . . What a stomach, what an intestine. He evacuates everything. He is always like a dog who just crapped: he is happy, he gallops . . . the body, the soul and the gut of man." While he flies he occasionally peers out at the land below and the sky around. He is astonished and dismayed at how little his fellow travelers look out. They keep "their nose[s] in magazines and detective novels" throughout the flight, rarely if ever looking through the porthole at what most enthralls him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Looking down, he is of course interested in panoramas of various sorts. The quickly sketched air view begins for him back in the Twenties when he discovers the airplane. But what may be the most prevalent object of his attention from this vantage point, certainly the one on which he lavishes most comment and thought in the sketchbooks, comes as something of a surprise. It is estuaries and deltas. How astonishing it is that Le Corbusier, who was so devoted to clear forms, who complained that "the almost-but-not-quite is everywhere. Nothing exact, definite . . ." should find the amorphous windings of watercourses, bearing the silt that causes the shifting meanders, so fascinating.

The estuaries attract as his native Alps repel. Repeatedly flying over the Alps on his way to or from Paris, he is reminded of his father's presidency of the Alpine Club; but he no longer finds these mountains exhilarating. On the contrary, they are "sublime and repellent." "November 28, 1951/I saw the Alps this morning . . . all naked! . . . (9:40 AM GMT) I prefer the setting sun on the Arabian sea [which he had just experienced]. The Alps are anything but inviting =the anti-man! It's horrible! Good for Freudianism! They convey an image of inextricability." And later, during yet another flight over the mountains, point-blank, "I hate the Alps."

Not so his aerial views of deltas and estuaries, which could have been quite as daunting if experienced on the ground. "Bombay Delhi Plane November 13, 1953—5 PM/ The estuaries of the sea, the deltas are in scale with the Himalayas. Just as inaccessible to man: silt, amazing pools, effects of tide far into the interior, danger[ous] probably." On another occasion: "I again see this endless delta from Karachi to Ahmedabad . . . gradient of waters, erosion, the patient ebb of the sea, molecular then by streams, and great arms of meanders calmed by their undulating progress. One cannot draw [it], the pencil fails. Because it is a question of the most delicately shaded values, the most tenuous ramifications, of impeccable [color] gradations . . . . the immensity . . . ." Or: "everything comes to the sea/13h 13 nov 55," and he sketches the mini-tributaries, half mud, half water, that join the bigger flows. As the flow widens to the mouth of the river, he quickly outlines the estuary with a lead pencil, and scribbles in the muddy shores and shoals with two shades of brown pencil. At the mouth, he stretches his word "immense" with opposed arrows to indicate that no mere sketchpad could encompass such vastness. He is entranced by the color of the delta near Karachi: "February 27, 1954 . . . perfectly smooth red violet-shaded meander (and with cobalt blue) pattern of an intense acuity . . . Cut with a razor—very pale blue: 5%." The low tide at Bombay leaves behind "decalcomania" of black sand. Near Bombay, on another flight, the undulations of river and rivulets in the delta call up recollections of "Knossos [Crete] pottery" and "Modern Style 1900." The glints of a lake-dotted, river-wound landscape near the Gath Mountains bring Leonardo's labyrinthian landscapes to mind. Between Basrah and Bombay, he notes "a formidable 'branched' delta—like the boughs of gigantic oaks," with pools depended from the meander like leaves; between Chandigarh and Cairo he sees another delta, this time of dried salt marshes, which appear in the sketchbook as withered foliage.

What accounts for this fascination with primeval landscape, more intensely absorbing for Le Corbusier, it would seem, than comparable views of the configurations made by human actions on the earth? Obviously one can make a connection between the colossal windings of the dominant meanders and his projects for the immense wind of highway-scaled buildings around the harbors of Algiers and Rio, or his subsequent conception of the linear regional development of urbanism in Western Europe, where major center connects major center in river-like windings following the principle routes of transport, with open space (as he hoped) left in the interstices of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the webbing. And the graduated quality of movement within the delta—from percolations in the sand, to rivulets, to streams, to river meanders—are surely analogous to his ideal hierarchy of traffic movement along the "7-Vs" (Voies), graduated from footpath to superhighway. Yet the meaning for the delta must go deeper.

A clue appears perhaps in a scribbled comment written while he looked down on an estuary in Cuba: "the law of the meander (1929) meanders 1947 etc./erosion, the law of rhythm and equilibrium at any moment, the relationships of measuring out = proportion."

This enigmatic entry refers to a lecture in a series he gave in South America in 1929, in one of which (entitled "A Man = A Cell/ From Cells = A City") he spoke of the "law of the meander." *Précisions,* the book that resulted from this lecture tour, reproduces it. The "law of the meander" illustrates the manner in which nature corrects developments toward excessive complexity and elaboration. It serves as an analogy for understanding the cause and correction of problems occurring in the modern urban situation. A river following a relatively straight course is deflected by an obstacle on its left bank. Water currents are deflected toward the right bank. Erosion occurs. With time, the scoop of this erosion deflects the current back toward the left bank. Now erosion occurs on the left bank, and the current swings back to the right bank again. So the river increasingly winds. As the oscillating erosion continues, the windings become labyrinthian, taking the form of deep curves, eventually assuming near figure-eight configurations. But as the barrier of silt between each of these turnings is lessened, the river finally breaks through the fragile barriers. It returns to its original direct course, ready for the slow process to begin anew.

Involved in the analogy are four actions, all significant for Le Corbusier's ideas on healthy physical and social planning: a natural and dynamic process; a state of continuous, but changing, equilibrium; an inevitable increase in complication over time; and a radical breakthrough to correct too much complexity, without which both the dynamic process and its sequential states of equilibrium would be destroyed. A dense and ambiguous metaphor, then: for urban planning it implies the need for such heroic breakthrough measures as super-buildings, whether towers or viaducts, which Le Corbusier tends to favor early in his career; it implies as well the need to attend to the slow workings of natural processes, which Le Corbusier increasingly appreciated later in his career, especially after his contact with less developed societies.

Significantly, on the very next page of the sketchbook, where he muses over the "law of the meander" (with its "law of rhythm and equilibrium at any moment, the relationships of measuring out=proportion"), his thoughts shift back to India. He recalls "the essential joys of the Hindu principle: brotherhood, relationship between the cosmos and living things: Stars, nature, sacred animals, birds, monkeys, and cows, and in the village children, adults, and old people, the pond and the mango trees, everything is present and . . . poor but *proportioned.*" He is moved by the chaos of primal stuff, in continuous, organic flux, but always in equilibrium—"proportioned" perhaps in the combination of its equilibrium and in the elemental nature of its composition. He believes that the airplane has opened the ways of Asia to the Western world, and sees this inversion of the technological as the silting counter-element, so to speak, to the delta of future civilization, checking the swift flow of modernization.

In Cairo, he is attracted by a park in which paths wind every which way in squiggles around trees and clumps of foliage, made by the mesh of people moving in all directions across it. In Chandigarh, across the skewed rectangular grid of the street system he creates a winding counter-grid of paths for pedestrians. In the center of each super-block these crossing pedestrian rivulets expand to irregular communal pools as meeting- and marketplaces, like the bend of the swamp-bound river seen from the air in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bogotá, fed by a series of pools of varied sizes along its course. Chandigarh, he proclaims, will be, above all, a pedestrian city, the walkers' warp woven into the automobiles' weft. Looking at the movement of people in the streets of Asia, he generalizes the situation for the future of human culture: "Let us overlook our kind of street, we knew it in our childhood. But the street of the Indians, the Egyptians, the Chinese it's a huge thing in full ferment and possible bloom."

The delta, and that other immense, amorphous environment—the sky—obsesses him as he soars in "peace" and "solitude" between the calls of his career. Cosmic slime and cosmic heavens are the extremes that meet in his view of nature, which is less that of the farmer, like Frank Lloyd Wright's, and more that of the aviator, the sea captain, and the motorist at full throttle. Repeatedly Le Corbusier confronts the changing skies in his sketchbook and records the impossibility of taking it all in, let alone taking it down. The usual results are garish notations in colored pencil accompanied by astute written comment, or, better perhaps, pencil sketches with the colors simply noted. On a flight to Karachi over the Indian Ocean ("10 nov 55") he fills a page with a Rothko-like series of color bands: a narrow band of bright yellow edged with vivid green and orange at the center; rising from it, brilliant red flaring horizontals; below, a quiet blue shading off into pale lavender. Beside the page in color he draws a diagram: "the intensity [is in the central band] the force [is in the red] the density [is in the lower zone] the depth [is in the whole]." He devotes a number of pages to skies. Some, especially evocative, show cloud columns rising through cloud banks toward the clear sky of the high-flying plane. But one more must suffice. Again he makes his color sketch, a looser series of somber bands this time, layered with views through to puffy clouds below; immediately ahead a deep blue, out of which red and yellow flare up to (and he writes this at the top of the page because there is no more room to include it) pale green overhead with the spectral appearance of a high white moon. As before, on the next page he comments, "1. *in the east*: the violet bite out of the horizon of fire and light, on a base of gray-violet clouds lit from behind/ 2. in *the west* . . . the ineffable, gentle attenu*ated* values/one could play the 2 effects in succession and rise to the contrasting crescendo . . . ."

He was working at the time on the Phillips Pavilion, to house a display for this major European electrical company at the Brussels Exposition. The sketchbook shows a number of crude diagrams of the multimedia effects that were to engulf the visitors to Le Corbusier's tilted aluminum tent (originally more in the shape of the cannon skylights on the roofs of his chapels for the Monastery of La Tourette). There are pages of scenario for the mixed environment of sound, color, picture, and didactics that would envelope the visitor's consciousness.

Another page of the sketchbooks shows in the quickest of crude diagrams the museum which he would have liked for Chandigarh—a variant, and reduction, of which was eventually completed after Le Corbusier's death. His ideal museum would be housed in three separate buildings. There is a large building for permanent display of artifacts from the history spiral that Le Corbusier had originated in his Mundaneum project of 1929: one entered by way of an underground passage to the core gallery, with the rectangular spiral of galleries growing from this center and extending as needed. Beside this is an open pavilion with a gently gabled roof abutting another with the gable inverted, like two gazebos pushed together. Le Corbusier had projected the idea originally for the "Porte Maillot" display in Paris in 1950 and toward the end of his life resurrected the scheme for the Centre Le Corbusier in Zurich. In contrast to the permanent exhibition in the spiral box, the open, less monumental pavilion structure would feature temporary shows. Finally, beside this, is the third component—what he terms the Miracle Box. He does not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

precisely define its function; but he intends it as a place of performance. In it he envisions something of a cross between the stylized theater of the Noh drama, which had impressed him in Japan as being adaptable to some sort of ritualistic pageant based on local folk tradition, and a multi-media electronic program comparable to that which he finally realized for Phillips. What he has in mind, however, is not "electronic vaudeville," or some other kind of show with superficial technological tricks to grip the audience. He wants what he terms "electronic effects"—by which he seems to mean effects endowed with the same magical and transcendent presence as signs in folklore and ritual, signs distilled from everyday experience, and signs of the cosmos, like the skies into which he sailed in his travels.

A Miracle Box! But the true Miracle Box was there in the closet at 24 rue Nungesser-et-Coli, the valise crammed with its neat rows of sketchbooks.

It is some time on 22 November 1951. He seems again to be in the midst of flight, somewhere in the peace of the sky between New Delhi and Bombay, lost to blessed aloneness and meditation. He is reading (or perhaps merely remembering) Mallarmé, and writes in the sketchbook at hand:

> Car j'installe, par la science
> l'hymne des coeurs spirituels
> En l'oeuvre de ma patience

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Art

The Morton Schamberg retrospective

by Hilton Kramer

A retrospective exhibition devoted to the work of an immensely gifted artist who died at an early age is bound to be an experience of special poignancy. The more we admire the work, the more likely we are to be haunted by thoughts of what the artist might have accomplished in the course of a normal life span. For in the perspective of his foreshortened career, his every solid achievement acquires a sort of double existence for us. There is the work itself, in all of its manifest quality, and there is also the penumbra of unrealized possibility that accompanies it. To the extent that such artists make a difference in the art of their time, we seem to suffer their loss anew at each encounter with their best efforts.

In the case of Morton Livingston Schamberg, whose work is currently the subject of a traveling retrospective exhibition,[1] there is the additional factor of the artist's historical situation. Schamberg belonged to the first generation of American modernists, and he shared a good many of the difficulties faced by that generation in its effort to come to grips with the innovations of the European avant-garde. He was remarkably quick to grasp the importance of those innovations, and he proved to have the requisite gifts—including the gift of intelligence—for effectively adapting them to the lineaments of his own experience. At the same time, Schamberg felt very keenly the isolation that was the common fate of the modernist painter in his time, and knew from the outset that it was more or less out of the question for him to win a sympathetic public for the kind of art that most interested him or, indeed, to make a living from producing it. Yet none of this seems to have impeded his artistic progress once he had determined his course. His resoluteness in this respect would have been remarkable enough for an American artist in the early years of the century working in Paris or even New York. In the far more provincial atmosphere of Schamberg's native Philadelphia, to which he remained firmly attached despite his contacts with Paris and New York, it entailed an exceptional exertion of will and independence. Only in the last years of his life—Schamberg died in 1918 two days before his thirty-seventh birthday—did the artist's spirit falter. Yet even this change, when it occurred, had more to do with the historical enormity (as he saw it) of the First World War and its implications for his art than with any bitterness or disillusion-

1 The Morton Livingston Schamberg retrospective was organized by the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc., in New York, and first shown there in November-December 1982. It then traveled to the Columbus Museum of Art and is currently on view in Philadelphia at the Peale House Galleries of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (April 4-May 6). It will later be seen at the Milwaukee Art Museum (February 11-March 27, 1984) and the Arts Club of Chicago (September 17-November 3, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment caused by resistance to the art itself.

He was born in Philadelphia in 1881, the youngest child in a German Jewish family that William C. Agee, in his essay for the catalogue accompanying the current retrospective, describes as "prosperous and conservative."[2] From what we know of them, the Schambergs were not a family much given to encouraging either artistic pursuits or unconventional behavior of any sort.[3] The father was a dealer in cattle, the mother died when Schamberg was a child. All the same, Schamberg seems to have been treated with a good deal of consideration, and his family ties remained close. He was given an extensive artistic education—first in the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, from which he was graduated as a Bachelor of Architecture in 1903, and then at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he concentrated on painting for three years. (The friendships he made with Charles Sheeler and Walter Pach, who were fellow students at the Academy, date from this period; they appear to be the only close attachments Schamberg made outside of his immediate family.) While studying at the Academy under William Merritt Chase, he was treated to his first trips abroad. He was given a year in Paris upon the completion of his studies in 1906, and he journeyed to Europe again in 1908. All of this, as far as we know, was at the expense of the artist's disapproving father. At the time of Schamberg's death in 1918, both father and son resided at the same hotel in downtown Philadelphia. In quick succession both were victims of the influenza epidemic that swept the world in the last year of the war.

The earliest painting that we see in the current retrospective is *The Regatta,* which is signed and dated 1907. Exactly where this brilliant little picture was painted is not known—it depicts decorated sailboats observed from the shore, and was very likely executed during a summer visit to Gloucester, Massachusetts—but both its outdoor subject and its luminous, painterly style clearly reflect an admiring knowledge of the French Impressionists. Traces of this Impressionist manner persist for a time, but by 1909 it gives way to the various Post-Impressionist strategies that give a radical priority to structure over sensation. Mr. Agee suggests that during his last stay in Europe, where he was joined for a time by Sheeler, Schamberg came under the influence of Leo Stein (whom he met through Pach). It was probably Stein who sent the two Philadelphians to Italy to study the Old Masters, for Stein had worked out an elaborate theory relating Italian quattrocento painting to the innovations of Céznne and Matisse. It was at this time, in any case, that Schamberg produced his remarkable copies of Piero della Francesca's *Duchess of Urbino* and Lorenzo di Credi's *Venus*—both are included in the current exhibition—and at this time, too, that he got to know the work of Matisse, with its highly original concentration on color and structure. Mr. Agee is no doubt right when he observes that "the intensity of this experience in 1909 was fundamental to the evolution of [Schamberg's] art."

Oddly enough, it wasn't until he encountered it in the Armory Show in New York in 1913 that Cubism, which was to play a decisive role in his most original work, first made a very deep impression on Schamberg's pictorial thought. (One wonders if Leo Stein, who was turning against Cubism, might have had something to do with this, too.) Perhaps he wasn't ready to make use of Cubist form before 1913, for Schamberg was never an abject imitator or style-

2 The illustrated catalogue of the Schamberg exhibition, with a text by William C. Agee and a checklist by Pamela Ellison, is published by the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc., 22 East 80th Street, New York 10021, at $20 (plus $2 for postage). Mr. Agee's essay gives us the best account of Schamberg's artistic development that we have.

3 Ben Wolf's sketchy monograph, *Morton Livingston Schamberg* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), is the principal published source of biographical information on the artist. Neither as biography nor as art history can it be confidently relied upon, however.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monger. In the period following his return to Philadelphia, he worked his way through the ideas he had acquired in Europe, and these turned mainly on assimilating the work of Cézanne and Matisse. Even when he adopted Cubist form in 1913, he used it as a means of organizing his pictures into Cézannesque structures of color. Cubism gave Schamberg a way of geometrizing his subjects. The latter might not remain discernible, but whether or not the subject could be discerned, the effect was to relegate it to a subsidiary role and thus permit painting to enter the realm of abstraction. In the years 1913-15 Schamberg's art remained poised on the shifting frontiers of the new abstract art, never quite taking possession of this unfamiliar terrain and never entirely withdrawing from it. Not that there is anything diffident in the pictures of this period. Far from it. We are made to feel a distinct acceleration in the scale of the artist's ambition. The Armory Show seems to have renewed Schamberg's confidence in his artistic mission, and it certainly encouraged a greater degree of audacity in his art. He was himself represented in this historic exhibition, and it spurred him into acting for the first time as a public spokesman for the cause of modernism. He was even responsible for bringing a smaller version of the exhibition to Philadelphia. It is in the pictures of this period that we see Schamberg emerging from isolation to produce his most distinctive work.

It has long been recognized, of course, that it is in the machine paintings of the war years that Schamberg's most original work is to be found. Historians have hitherto been a little too eager, perhaps, to assume that these paintings were created under the direct influence of Picabia, Duchamp, and other avant-garde eminences of the day. The effect of this has been to blur our understanding of Schamberg's own work and its role in sparking the development of the Precisionist movement in American painting—a movement essentially different in spirit and style from the variety of Dadaism that flourished in New York in this period. The whole subject is admittedly a tangled one. Schamberg *was* closely involved with the New York Dada group, and undoubtedly drew some sustenance from them. Yet his own interest in machine forms seems to have pre-dated theirs, and his paintings based on telephones and other machines show not the slightest trace of that peculiar amalgam of irony, mockery, comical eroticism, and cheerful nihilism we have come to recognize as the hallmark of their art. The note that is sounded in Schamberg's machine paintings is, on the contrary, unmistakably one of admiration and lyric celebration, and is thus very much at odds with the Dada attitude. It was precisely because of his celebratory outlook, in fact, that Schamberg suffered a severe crisis over this work at the very moment when he was, as Mr. Agee says, "at the peak of his powers." Appalled by the carnage of the war in Europe, he could no longer sustain his optimistic and somewhat innocent vision of machine civilization. "We may speculate," writes Mr. Agee, "that Schamberg could not [reconcile] the lucid, ideal order of his machine paintings with the death and destruction that the machine was causing in the war." Sometime in 1916, after creating an uninterrupted succession of brilliant pictures, he abruptly abandoned the machine paintings, and thus unwittingly brought his oeuvre to an end.

Before he died, however, Schamberg produced two works that may be taken as emblems of his divided outlook at the end, for they point in very different directions. One was the construction of a plumbing fixture mounted on a box that was mockingly entitled *God* (1917-18). This was Schamberg's only authentic Dada creation, and Mr. Agee is surely correct in describing it as "a bitter anti-war statement." The other was a serene *Bowl of Flowers* (1918), an exquisitely realistic watercolor that is the artist's last known work. From such a stark contrast of bitterness and serenity we are offered no very definite clues to the direction Schamberg's art might have taken had he survived. All that we can be certain of is that his death marked an important loss for American art—more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you have not subscribed to

The New Criterion

edited by Hilton Kramer

you are missing out on the most important cultural review to have appeared in a generation.

Since its first monthly issue, published in September 1982, THE NEW CRITERION has been the subject of controversy. Acclaimed and denounced, it has quickly established itself as the leading critical journal of the 1980s. Here, selected from the first seven issues, are some of the reasons why:

■ *William Arrowsmith:* Eros in Terre Haute: T.S. Eliot ■ *Frederick Brown:* Sartre and de Beauvoir ■ *Hortense Calisher:* The Novels of Barbara Pym ■ *Elias Canetti:* Berlin in the 1920s ■ *Joseph Epstein:* Reviewing and Being Reviewed ■ *Joshua Gilder:* Ann Beattie's Stories ■ *Gertrude Himmelfarb:* Who Now Reads Macaulay? ■ *Ada Louise Huxtable:* Skyscraper Architecture ■ *William H. Jordy:* Frank Lloyd Wright at the Met ■ *Hilton Kramer:* Postmodern: The 1980s ■ *Brad Leithauser:* Metrical Illiteracy ■ *Samuel Lipman:* Stravinsky—Re-recording History ■ *Joseph Masheck:* Calder's No-Fault "Circus" ■ *John Bernard Myers:* Mark Rothko and the Rothko Case ■ *David Paul:* Richard Howard's Baudelaire ■ *Donald Petersen:* The Legacy of Robert Lowell ■ *Norman Podhoretz:* F.R. Leavis: A Revaluation ■ *Frederic Prokosch:* Memoirs of Artists and Writers ■ *Robert Richman:* In Search of Edward Thomas ■ *Sanford Schwartz:* The Art of Anselm Kiefer ■ *And two special features:* ■ "The Interrogation": The Fate of a Polish Film under Martial Law ■ *Hortense Calisher:* "Writers in Eastern Europe," with responses by Stanislaw Barańczak, William Barrett, Cynthia Ozick, and Richard Wilbur.

These are representative of the articles, chronicles, and reviews that appear in every issue of THE NEW CRITERION, published ten times a year, monthly from September through June. To open your subscription, starting with the April 1983 issue, use the coupon. Please note that prepaid subscriptions bring a saving of $3 (for one year) and $5 (for two years).

The New Criterion P.O. Box 5194 FDR Station New York, N.Y. 10150

Please open my subscription, starting with the April 1983 issue, on the terms I have checked below:

I choose to save by enclosing payment

☐ *One year, 10 issues ($24 enclosed, I save $3)*

☐ *Two years, 20 issues ($45 enclosed, I save $5)*

Please bill me at the regular rate

☐ *One year, 10 issues (Bill me for $27)*

☐ *Two years, 20 issues (Bill me for $50)*

Charge my MasterCard No. _____
at the prepaid rate: ☐ *One year, $24* ☐ *Two years, $45*

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make check payable to The New Criterion. Foreign subscribers (including Canada and Latin America) add $4 per year, with total payable in U.S. funds. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for your April issue to arrive.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

important than we have heretofore realized.

Of the nearly seventy works that make up the current retrospective, the most amazing—not only for their remarkable quality but because they have never before been published or exhibited—are a series of small pastels of machine images executed, it is believed, in 1916. There are nearly twenty works on paper in this series, which was only recently discovered in Philadelphia, and they are unquestionably among Schamberg's most beautiful pictures. Based on the forms of a Champion wire-stitching machine used by printers and bookbinders, these pastel *Compositions,* as they are called, are pictures of the most extraordinary delicacy—shimmering evocations of light and color that transform their given motifs into images of a flowerlike tenderness. Neither wholly abstract nor exactly representational, they are Schamberg's most poetic works—and they remind us, incidentally, of how much remains to be discovered, and rediscovered, in the American art of his time.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion:*

The letters of Henry Adams *by Norman Podhoretz*
Fairfield Porter *by Hilton Kramer*
British poetry today *by Donald Hall*
The architecture of Michael Graves *by William H. Jordy*
Mark Rothko & the Rothko case: *an exchange between Donald M. Blinken and John Bernard Myers*
The González exhibition *by William Tucker*
The case of Roy Campbell *by Robert Richman*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Theater

Hamlet undone

by Mimi Kramer

In the autumn of 1966 a group of students at the Yale Drama School was given an unusual assignment: they were asked to adapt the text of *Hamlet,* reducing the number of characters to five or six and cutting the play down to forty-five minutes. The project was assigned by a New York theatrical producer who had been given a one-year visiting appointment at the drama school and asked to teach a course in play production to second- and third-year students majoring in directing. The assignment was not entirely curricular: the students were given to understand that one of their efforts would be chosen for a production in New York cast with professional actors. The students went to work and, in time, one of the adaptations was indeed brought to the New York stage.

The play opened in the winter of 1967 and on the whole it was an unconventional offering. In the first scene Hamlet was discovered naked, manacled, and locked in a coffin at the foot of Claudius and Gertrude's bed. When clothed, Hamlet appeared wearing flowered shorts or a white suit with a black beret; he sold balloons and roasted peanuts to the audience. In fishnets, top hat, and tails, Ophelia did a nightclub floor show, singing rock music into a microphone. Hamlet spoke his third soliloquy in a Puerto Rican accent, fell into a trash can, did a Charlie McCarthy routine sitting on the ghost's knee, and asked members of the audience how they were enjoying the play. The ghost dashed about the stage in long johns. In addition to these innovations, at the request of the producer the script included some eight lines of pentameter composed by the drama school student "for plotting purposes."

The production, which came to be known as "The Naked Hamlet," caused not so much a stir among the critics as a rustle of boredom. Clive Barnes wrote in *The New York Times*: "Look, teacher has drawn a mustache on that nice lady—see, teacher is showing us that art can be FUN . . . . Why not *Hamlet* as a genuine, total rock musical? At least it wouldn't be prissy!"

The small theater in downtown Manhattan where "The Naked Hamlet" had opened was largely dependent for its funding on a contract between the producer and the Board of Education's Bureau of Audio-visual Instruction. Under the terms of this contract the producer was obliged to stage one Shakespearean play a year to be taken around to the city schools and performed for audiences of school children. When the Board of Education pieced together from almost unanimously unenthusiastic reviews the form in which *Hamlet* was to tour the New York City public school system, the Superintendent of Schools raised an objection.

Luckily, the theatrical producer was a man of vision. With a few well-placed telephone calls he was able to take both the Board of Education and *The New York Times*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critic to task for their adverse judgments of his play. A call to CBS got him invited to a live talk show with Clive Barnes: during the debate, the producer shelled and ate roasted peanuts, occasionally throwing them at the critic. A call to the *Times* got him a published statement in the newspaper: "There is nothing in the contract . . . that gives [the Board of Education] the right to censor our production." The producer asked the deputies from the Board of Education to attend a special performance of the play. Without the Board's knowing it, he also invited an audience of school children to fill the theater and a CBS television camera crew to cover the event. When the play was over, the Board still thought the producer was violating the terms of his contract: "the Board contracted for Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* You haven't given us Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*" The producer retorted: "Don't tell me how to direct and I won't tell you how to teach."

In the end the Board offered a compromise: the producer could keep the fifty thousand dollars he had received for the project if he would just please not take the production on its scheduled tour of the city schools. This arrangement sat well with the producer. Apparently, the school program—all those early morning assemblies in remote places—was becoming a drag for the company. As a result of the compromise, the school children of New York got no Shakespeare at all in 1968 and Joseph Papp's Public Theater got fifty thousand dollars, with which Papp financed the building of a new stage.

My account of this story comes from a book about Joseph Papp written in the early Seventies.[1] It's all there: the producer's high-handed attitude toward the drama-school curriculum, toward the play, toward the press, toward the Board of Education, and even toward "the public." What's interesting is that the book is a fawning biography of the producer by an ardent admirer and friend. Such was the power of Joseph Papp's appeal—at least in 1974, when the book first appeared.

1 *Enter Joseph Papp* by Stuart W. Little, Putnam's.

Joseph Papp still likes to think of himself as the *enfant terrible* of the New York theater scene, taking chances and running risks in the name of theater that boldly confronts convention. Recently he "boldly" produced *Hamlet* again, this time with a woman in the lead role. According to a *New York Times* interview (November 11, 1982), the director of the New York Shakespeare Festival expected his "female *Hamlet*" at the Public Theater to be "controversial":

> "I think most people would not approve of having a woman in the role," he says cheerfully. "I think most audiences are conservative about a change of sex of any kind, and they consider *Hamlet* sacrosanct." He grins.

"For years I have wanted to do a female *Hamlet,*" he went on to say. "I have always felt that there is a strong female side to Hamlet." Hedging his bets, he added, ". . . not feminine so much as female." The person playing Hamlet "should be able to weep unabashedly and unashamedly" because "Hamlet is a very young person, an adolescent, a student." Papp told the *Times* reporter: "I've seen things in this *Hamlet* I've never seen before. It illuminates parts of the play you would never see if a man were playing the role. When you take a major classic and change the terms of it, you immediately force people to really look at it again . . . . [W]hole new areas of the play sprang to life." Well.

The marble-columned Anspacher Theater, where they do the "classical stuff" at the Public, isn't a very large theater. It only seats about two hundred people. The acting area runs straight through the space, the two halves of the audience facing each other from not very far away. As a result you can see from just about anywhere in the theater both the stage and the faces of the people scattered among the eighty or ninety seats on the other side of the stage. The acoustics are fantastic, so you can also hear what the people around you are saying.

On the night that I attended *Hamlet,* close

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the end of its run, the audience was mixed. I could see one group of school children across the way and in the row behind me I could hear another. On my right and left were two middle-aged couples and just in front of me was a woman with a little girl of perhaps eight or nine. Next to them sat three young men fresh off the squash courts who looked as if they would not have felt out of place at Dartmouth, and further down the row was an array of students who looked as if they would. It occurred to me that one could not have asked for a much more representative section of "the public" or a situation better designed for becoming acquainted with them as an audience. Then the lights went down and things began to happen.

The play opened, surprisingly, with a fitting directorial emphasis on death and ceremony: two soldiers came on stage and removed a marblesque casket bearing the name of Hamlet *père*. The soldiers disappeared with their solemn burden, leaving the stage free for the entrance of the watch, clad in Wellington boots and vaguely nineteenth-century costume. Horatio lit a pipe and had some trouble with the language: ". . . without the sensible and true avouch of *my known* eyes," he said. Still, things were going rather well.

With banners, hautbois, and clarions the mood of mystery gave way to the imposing ceremony of the Danish court, resplendent with fine Georgian silver. The men were in Victorian garb, the women in late fifteenth-century; Claudius was in military dress uniform and Gertrude gorgeous in a gown of royal purple velvet. Claudius delivered his speech and Laertes his request while the court stood at elegant attention. The only shabbiness to the scene was lent by a runtish page-boy who slouched against a doorpost in black ski-pants and a jersey and surveyed the scene with surly indifference. Just as one noticed him and gulped in nervous disbelief, the page-boy stepped forward and announced meaningfully: "A little more than kin and less than kind!" The audience laughed. So much for Hamlet's ironic opening "aside."

Diane Venora's Hamlet certainly illuminated parts of the play one would not ordinarily have seen. I don't think the "different" perspective she offered on the play resulted from her not being a man, though. I think it resulted from her not understanding her lines. The eccentricities in her delivery reduced some of the play's least controversial passages to a special kind of meaninglessness. Often it had merely to do with where she put the emphasis in a sentence; almost invariably an unsuitable action indicated that she had entirely missed the point of the words.

Great waves of indignation swept over her as she hurled at Gertrude the information that it was not alone her inky cloak nor customary suits of solemn black, nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath, no, nor the fruitful river of the eye that could denote her truly. But perhaps someone should have explained to her that she was meant to be denigrating these "trappings . . . of woe," not boasting of them. When, later, ruminating alone on her mother's o'erhasty marriage, she roared, "Must *I* remember?" the emphasis suggested that Gertrude's peccadilloes were really so much in the public consciousness that any concern on Hamlet's part would be redundant. Greeting Horatio, she quizzed him, "What make *you* from *Wittenberg*?" as though she had naturally assumed he would be coming from New Jersey.

There is, to be sure, such a thing as reinterpreting the conventional reading of a controversial passage or a character's motivation in Shakespeare. When, for example, in Nicol Williamson's film version of *Hamlet,* Laertes' parting advice to his sister regarding her chaste treasure was accompanied by an incestuous kiss, this was a major reinterpretation of a conventional reading. Not, perhaps, a very ingenious one, but a reinterpretation all the same. But Venora's misreadings—turning an exclamatory "Why!" into an interrogative "Why? She, even she . . ."—were not the stuff of revisionist theater. They were sheer incompetence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As for the controversial aspect of Venora's gender, it never really became an issue. The audience never got the chance to worry about Hamlet's sex because Venora's performance was so filled with other peculiarities. She neither took on the aspect and mannerisms of a man nor lent female overtones to the persona of a young boy. She only succeeded in seeming like a rather masculine type of young woman trying to play the part of Hamlet as a toughie. And if there's one thing Hamlet just isn't, it's a toughie.

In Venora's mouth all Hamlet's expressions of irony, of sincerity, of self-doubt—in short, the language and thought that are the keynote of his character—took on the aspect of sit-com punchlines, uttered with the loud conviction that seems to expect a burst of pre-recorded laughter. "O my prophetic soul!" was delivered with the matter-of-fact weariness of "I knew it! Uncle's up to his old tricks again." When Horatio, concerned for Hamlet's lone encounter with the ghost, asked anxiously, "What news, my lord?" Venora rolled her eyes heavenward and bleated, "O wonderful," as one might say, "Swell, just swell." (A spirited young mind behind me whispered, "We had Popeye before; now we get Olive Oyl!") In a sing-song voice Venora chided, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio . . ." as though she expected the line to conclude ". . . than you can count on the fingers of one hand." The boys all swore on the sword and Venora shouted, "The time is out of joint. O curséd spite / That ever I was *born* to set it right!" (As opposed to what? Hired?) When Venora, with a quasi-psychotic chuckle, sang out, ". . . let's go to-ge-ther!" to the tune of "I see-ee you!" and skipped offstage, the man sitting next to me remarked to his wife, "This is the most bizarre performance of anything I have ever seen anywhere."

Possibly the low point of the evening was Venora's rendition of the second soliloquy. The lead-in, again, was puzzling: "Now I *am* alone!" (Had there been some confusion about this?) The "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy follows the scene in which Hamlet and the player king recite a speech about the fall of Troy. Hamlet's point here is that his old friend the tragedian from Wittenberg, playacting, can demonstrate a more compelling concern for the plight of the Trojans than Hamlet himself seems able to show in his own situation:

> What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba
> That he should weep for her? What would
> he do
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have?

Venora's tone in uttering this speech was almost one of contempt: "Who does he think he's kidding? What's Hecuba to him!" Berating himself for failing to become an "actor" in his own drama, Hamlet tries to whip himself into the frenzy that might enable him to assume the stock role of avenger:

> He would drown the stage with tears . . .
> Make mad the guilty and appal the free . . .

But Venora was already in a frenzy when she began, so her words lacked any logical or emotional direction, let alone meaning.

It is an important moment in the play. This actor, says Hamlet, can *feign* a concern for the *shadow* of tragedy while I mope around here saying and doing nothing for a king upon whose property and most dear life a damned defeat was made. If anyone called me coward or villain, what could I do but agree! Something happens to Hamlet's language here: he has stopped talking like himself:

> Bloody, bawdy villain!
> Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless
> villain!
> O vengeance!

But Venora's method acting had nothing to teach her about what was happening to Hamlet in this speech, nothing that might have elicited an intelligent or even a plausible interpretation of the scene. She knew

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only how to work from the inside outward, how to "be" Hamlet—or her idea of Hamlet. Unfortunately, as so often happens with Shakespeare and method actors, the mind of the performer was a poorer machine than that of the poet who conceived the character. Venora's face crumpled, childlike, and the words became unintelligible through the bout of uncontrollable sobbing that seized her. A very choreographed descent on the wild string of epithets brought Venora, by "O vengeance!," to her knees, where she proceeded to pound the floor with her fists, throw herself prostrate on the ground, kick out her legs behind, and then turn over on her back and pound the floor with her heels. Eight thumps, a flip, and a kick: it didn't look very much as though it came from "within." On "O what an ass am I" the audience laughed. Toward the end of the first half of the play, the audience was giggling, whispering, snorting, and sleeping, variously: doing just about everything but getting drawn into the action of the play.

Spirits revived, somewhat, during the intermission. Lurking in doorways, I caught snatches of people's views on the production: a few were for, most were against; not a word was said about the *tour de force* of having a woman play Hamlet. No one seemed to have noticed. Some of the high-school students from the row behind me were entertaining one another with imitations of Venora's performance. I doubted, somehow, that their derision sprang from unfavorable comparison with other *Hamlet*s they had seen.

It was at the beginning of the second half, when Hamlet has to give a little coaching session to the tragedians, that everyone began to look a little uncomfortable:

> Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue . . . . O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise . . . have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

One or two of the players looked as though they wished they were somewhere else. There was simply no getting away from it: Hamlet-imitating-a-bad-actor differed from Venora-acting not at all. She mouthed her speeches like the town crier, saw'd the air with her hand, and tore passions to tatters, to very rags. In short, she o'erstepped the modesty of nature.

The chairs in Gertrude's closet had an air of Louis XV about them. On one of these sat Kathleen Widdoes in Oriental splendor. On one side of the stage a set of brocade curtains (for an arras) drifted on beautifully oiled tracks and a lovely Persian carpet covered the floor. The closet-scene was the play's real turning point: for when Hamlet burst in upon this elegance, pouting, stamping, mugging, and carrying on, something odd began to happen.

Up until now Venora had merely been acting badly; now Hamlet began behaving badly, so badly in fact—shouting, strutting, sneering, spitting, sticking her hip out, sticking her tongue out—that Gertrude, frozen in regal dignity, came off rather well. Looked at in a certain way, in fact, the scene *was* a *tour de force,* for throughout Hamlet's "O blush where is thy shame" speech Venora skillfully kept the text from intruding upon our impression that Hamlet deserved to have his ears boxed. When, finally, Gertrude did box Hamlet's ears, there ensued a sort of wrestling match that landed them both on the floor in an entanglement of limbs. One feared for the Persian carpet.

Hamlet continued to disport himself, playing peekaboo with the arras curtains, jeering at Polonius's corpse, favoring his friends and elders with bronx cheers, sassing his parents, and generally behaving like an obnoxious six-year-old. When Venora wandered offstage belligerently singing "God Save the Queen," one wondered fleetingly, "Which queen?" The first Bess? The second? Victoria? Mathilda? The schoolchildren were laughing openly, but laughing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with Venora now, not at her: they were enjoying the spectacle of Hamlet misbehaving before all these dignified, important people.

Whole new areas of the play sprang to life—for the simple reason that everyone else in the play had moral ascendancy over Hamlet. One felt for poor Rosencrantz and Guildenstern having to deal with the ill-mannered brat; one sympathized with the parents, who must have been at their wits' end. No wonder they were sending Hamlet away! One hoped that in England at least he would learn manners. The icy pauses and withering stares with which the other actors met Venora's antics made one wonder whether their distaste were feigned or real—whether it were for Hamlet the character or for the girl. Either way you had a problem.

I crept out after the gravedigger scene. I had a feeling that if I waited around sooner or later someone would start saying nice things about Hamlet—that there cracked a noble heart or something—and I didn't think I could bear to hear anyone say nice things about this Hamlet. So I picked my way apologetically over the middle-aged couple on my right. I thought some of the other members of the audience eyed my departure a bit enviously, but I couldn't say for sure.

"For years I have wanted to do a female Hamlet," Joseph Papp said. So why now? There might have come to his attention a potentially great actress—like the great actresses who have played Hamlet before—whom he judged to be up to the challenge, but I think we can safely discount that possibility. It seems more likely that he believed in the novelty of the idea.

Novelty is a strictly relative concept: it has meaning only in relation to what has gone before and what else is around. If Papp's female *Hamlet* failed in its realization it was also, to some degree, doomed in its conception. First, no matter what Papp thinks, there is very little in the world of New York theater that is "sacrosanct," least of all Shakespeare. Frankly, the Public Theater could cast a kangaroo in the role of Hamlet without opening up anything more sinister than a few new vistas in boredom. You can't have innovation in live theater without the presence of some conventional live theater against which the innovation is a reaction, and there simply isn't a whole lot of good traditional Shakespeare around in New York. There isn't a lot of Shakespeare at all. Except for the productions of a couple of small off-off Broadway repertory companies, Papp's revisionist Shakespeare is all there is. In his quest for an innovative approach to Shakespeare, Papp is playing variations on a theme no one has heard.

That having been said, it is nevertheless not so very hard to understand the *desire* to innovate with *Hamlet,* considering how familiar the text of *Hamlet* is, to those (of course) who are familiar with Shakespeare. Even for those who know only a few plays, *Hamlet* is generally the one they know best. For a director, the desire to produce a *Hamlet* with a difference must be tempting on a scale positively Biblical.

At the same time, however, *Hamlet* presents a problem for a director who wants his production to be talked about because there is scarcely anything one could think of doing to *Hamlet* that has not already been done. Every possible permutation of character, relationship, or state of mind in the play has been explored: Hamlet mad in Act I, Ophelia pregnant in Act IV; Hamlet hostile to Horatio, Gertrude hostile to Ophelia; homosexual overtones between Hamlet and Horatio, a suggestion of incest between Hamlet and Gertrude; homosexual overtones between Hamlet and Rosencrantz, a suggestion of incest between Laertes and Ophelia. If Osric and the gravediggers have escaped a revisionist love-triangle, it's probably because they're never on stage at the same time.

The director is not the only one with problems. *Hamlet,* runs the old joke, is just a string of clichés. How can an actor possibly express a wish that this too, too solid flesh would melt, a conviction that the question is whether or not to be, a realization that con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

science doth make cowards of us all as though these thoughts were just now occurring to him for the first time? For the actor the trouble is that no matter what he does there is always before him the specter of the idiot in the second row mouthing through the third soliloquy with him. For the audience the trouble is that a point will come in the play when Hamlet *will* be reduced to thinking in tautologies and clichés. If the actor is not careful the audience won't notice the decline in Hamlet's quality of thought. And where will your tragedy be then?

Earlier this year, while the Public Theater was preparing to launch its publicity campaign for the "female *Hamlet,*" a London director was exploring the workings of theatrical innovation with rather more success and considerably less fuss. On September 22 a production of *Rigoletto,* staged by Jonathan Miller, opened at the English National Opera: it was received as revolutionary theater because of its flamboyant departure from the conventional approach to the staging of classical opera. The same day a production of *Hamlet,* also staged by Jonathan Miller, moved to the West End from the Royal Shakespeare Company's old "second stage" at the Warehouse Theater: the *Hamlet* was considered rather daring because it was, by the light of mainstream London theater, conservatively staged Shakespeare.

Unlike New Yorkers, Londoners are fortunate in having on tap a steady supply of first-rate Shakespeare in the institution of the Royal Shakespeare Company, who have down to a science the art of producing innovative theater without appealing to gratuitous novelty. The RSC's primary achievement probably lies in their ability to break through the barrier of the language without any damage to the poetry of the play: trained to pitch their delivery of pentameter somewhere between sound and sense, the RSC are masters at performing verse drama. In the hands of the RSC, mainstream London Shakespeare tends to be adventurous in production technique without involving the text in major reinterpretation. On the whole the Company manages to keep the eager tourists happy and the jaded Londoners talking with spectacle, fast pacing, music, blood, and lively, imaginative staging in anything from modern dress to cloth of gold.

In contrast to RSC Shakespeare, the Jonathan Miller *Hamlet* seemed a curiously muted production: with grey costumes against a set of slightly darker grey, it seemed to exist entirely in half-tones, appealing more to the mind than to the senses. Watching Anton Lesser, as Hamlet, create a character who could have walked out of any university campus, you caught your breath slightly realizing that RSC Shakespeare was, after all, rather stagey. You wouldn't hear a word said against it—it was wonderful stuff, RSC Shakespeare—but what a welcome relief it was not to hear every line pronounced with the famous RSC intonation, to escape the special RSC walk—that knock-kneed, pigeon-toed limp upstage used variously by a tragic hero bowed by the burden of a woe he cannot sustain or by a clown saddled with a particularly incomprehensible joke which must, perforce, involve excretion. In Anton Lesser, Miller even found an actor able to solve the cliché problem without having to perform soliloquies standing on one leg. Lesser managed to use the audience's knowledge of the text in order to make rational contact with them: gazing out toward horizons beyond the last row, he delivered the dangerously familiar lines not as though they were earth-shatteringly new ideas—if we had heard them before, well, they were thoughts (he made us feel) which other men in other ages might have had—but as though they had never until now come home to him in just this way. As a result, when Hamlet began speaking in truisms—"There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow"—you found yourself missing the old Hamlet of the soliloquies.

Miller distracted us with no psychological updating: Lesser's Hamlet did not have a hatred of women and sex or a problem with men and fathers; he was not of an innately nervous disposition; he did not view life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through a dark expanse of existential void. With the casebooks firmly closed, the audience was able to concentrate on the tragedy of a man who should have been equal to any situation—a sort of Renaissance hero still in his undergraduate years—gifted with philosophy, irony, moral imagination, and a way with people, who finds all the properties of wit and rhetoric useless against a situation straight out of Elizabethan melodrama. Not a wildly original approach to the play, granted: an interpretation that hardly went beyond the best that mainstream criticism has to offer. But how rare to see a production of *Hamlet* brave enough to rely for its power entirely on the text and a consistent vision of the play.

The Jonathan Miller *Hamlet* managed the neat trick of being innovative by being old-fashioned. Even so, the production's starkness seemed more than a bid for novelty in reaction against RSC grandeur and splendor, more than an assertion that you could do good Shakespeare without the spectacle. The near-minimalism seemed part of a larger plan: a wish to focus our attention on what was happening, in a play about a humanist hero, to language and ideas.

Not everyone could conceive a production like the Miller *Hamlet*. Joseph Papp, for instance, probably couldn't. In addition to wit and imagination, you would have to have a pretty good grasp of fundamental Shakespearean values. You would also have to like the play.

Miller was also fortunate in having an educated audience to play to, an audience exposed to state-of-the-art Shakespeare production by a first-rate resident company. New York has no such company, so even the most frenzied attempts at innovation—like the female *Hamlet*—fail to astonish. Joe Papp could go on re-writing Shakespeare till the cows came home and the public would do no more than crack its jaw yawning.

The sad irony is that Papp is the only one around who can really afford to do straight Shakespeare: because of the funding he gets, his is the only theater in New York that really doesn't have to worry about whether or not the house is full. No other company has the wherewithal to defray the cost of such a risk. So while Joseph Papp is hiring English actors to appear in plays by Caryl Churchill and David Hare, while he is sending *The Pirates of Penzance* and *A Chorus Line* to London and Brazil via Broadway, Shakespeare in New York, at the hands of the New York Shakespeare Festival, one way or another remains largely undone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"...Like taking an intellectual roller-coaster ride..."*

Dashing, brilliant, vigorous in its prose, witty in insights and above all, winning in its quicksilver ability to capture Lacan's irridescent traits." —*Harrison E. Salisbury

Inventor of the short session, intimate of French intellectuals like Derrida and Barthes, Jacques Lacan has remained an enigma since his expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association.

Now, Stuart Schneiderman, the only American to have undergone a training analysis with Lacan, provides the first graphic portrait of this controversial cultural figure.

"Schneiderman reveals Lacan—his world and the fancy fights about ideas and power among his cadres—as though this were one of Graham Greene's swift sports. It makes fascinating, witty, albeit at times tragic—and necessary reading for those who want to know what happened once Freudianism came to France, and the history of French thought now." —Barbara Probst Solomon

Jacques Lacan
The Death of an Intellectual Hero
Stuart Schneiderman

$14.95 at bookstores

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, MA 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Music

Opera in Germany

by Patrick J. Smith

American music critics writing on opera are thought by most European critics to be distressingly parochial. The attitude of fidelity to the composer's wishes, scenically and dramatically as well as musically, is considered by continental critics as quaint, certainly passé, and not a little naïve—adjectives which have been regularly applied to Americans by those from older and wiser civilizations.

At a time when European ideas of opera production are being seen more often on American stages and—more the point—European ideas are being widely disseminated through television (e.g., the Jean-Pierre Ponnelle stagings of Monteverdi operas, or the Chéreau staging of Wagner's *Ring*) and movies (the Hans Jürgen Syberberg *Parsifal*), it seemed to me that it might be productive to journey to Germany to see such productions *in situ*. Thus, one week, and five operas.

First of all, the disclaimer. What I saw was only a fraction of what is being newly produced; though that fraction is, I was told, typical of the best, and the work of stage directors who are highly regarded. In addition, that fraction is only a minimal percentage of the annual dose of performances in German opera houses, which are among the busiest in the world.

In Germany no less than in any European country, there is a pervasive cultural chauvinism, which dictates not only that the native works are forever kept before the public, but that it is the task of the state, be it on the federal, state, or local level, to provide funds for the dissemination of art. This chauvinism is seen at its narrowest in the presentation by German directors of works by German composers and playwrights in German-inspired stagings. The "culinary theater" of Max Reinhardt and others has disappeared, but the influence of Brecht and Piscator on stagings, in terms of simplified settings, work lights, discrete playing spaces, and an emotional distancing, remains pervasive. Yet this approach, though reinvigorated by directors from East Germany, has become mannered through over-familiarity. The force that Brecht, Piscator, and others provided through their opposition to the then-current popular taste has become dissipated through the obviousness of its symbolism and the calculated ugliness of its settings.

The significant difference between opera in Germany and in the United States is one of focus. American opera companies—even the smaller ones—share the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century viewpoint that the three criteria for opera are voice, voice, and voice. This viewpoint extends from the management through the attitude of the critics to that of the audiences, and persists even in the face of the lesser singers that most American companies can afford, and in the face of the "ensemble production" in which singing is placed within the context of staging.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Opera in Germany has different priorities. Central is the idea of the concept production, which is strongly under the control of the stage director. Insofar as German opera houses make their artistic statements in terms of new productions, it is through the concept and not through the choice of voices. Directors demand and get six to eight weeks of rehearsal.

Opera houses in Germany are, even at their largest, much smaller than opera houses in the United States. They are venues in which the text can be clearly heard and the singers clearly seen. The Frankfurt opera house, home of one of Germany's major opera companies, seats 1,380, and that is typical.

The outstanding difference between the earlier audience and that of today is the latter's far more developed sense of the visual, which has replaced the auditory as the primary sense gratification. Most audiences are unaware of this change. One explanation for this may be the pervasiveness of movies and television.

In opera, this has led to an almost universal spoken-theater practice known as "casting for type," which is the casting of singers for visual rather than vocal aptitude for the role. The look of the stage, in terms of sets and movement of people, is far more carefully thought out than phrasing or dynamics.

Why do directors feel compelled to reinterpret the classics? This is a knotty question compounded of a genuine spirit of inquiry, a dogged need to philosophize about a work of art, and perhaps a perceived necessity to do something different. Certainly the Germanic heaviness of approach, with its buttressing apparatus of the thick program book filled with articles on the opera, on the production, and on its history (with poetry and painting thrown in) tempts one to find an Erik Satie to reply. Nonetheless, the prevalence of these concept productions strongly suggests an attempt to prize open past history—the given of a nation's cultural heritage—to re-examine it in the light of present concerns. This procedure quite consciously skews the work under scrutiny.

The procedure is arrogant, as it inserts another creator into the equation. The work of an opera director, of course, is creative in its realization on stage of what the composer and librettist wrote. Quite often this realization departs from the letter of the text in search of a "subtext" or in spotlighting one aspect of the work. Sometimes this effort is a thoroughgoing recension, which nevertheless seeks to illumine the spirit underlying the work.

But increasingly, today, the work of the director goes beyond even these broad limits and actively creates anew, taking as basis the specifics of the text, the music, and the dramatic envelope but emerging largely independent of these specifics. A new work has thus been created within and around the old. Concept productions exist as variations on an original theme, variations that become far more important than the original.

The resulting entity is schizophrenic. It is schizophrenic in that, in every case, the specifics of the text and of the music are left intact, and are indeed treated as sacrosanct (the music is played uncut), yet what transpires visually is sharply at odds with what composer and librettist intended.

This is disturbing. For, by leaving the music and the text alone, a wedge of distance is driven between the two aspects of the performed entity. This wedge does produce a dramatic tension, but it equally prevents a full and empathetic relation with the work. The underlying idea, which is that the production is played as counterpoint to 1) the opera as it is remembered in its pristine form and 2) the music and text as faithfully rendered, is essentially ratiocinative and intellectual. It substitutes a continuous by-play of variation for what should be, in stage terms, both immediate and gripping on a musical and dramatic emotional level.

I found this to be the case with three of the productions I saw: Wagner's *Parsifal* in Frankfurt, Berg's *Lulu* in Hanover, and Weber's *Der Freischütz* in Stuttgart. All are masterpieces of German-speaking opera. All

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are well known to the intellectual German music public; *Parsifal* and *Der Freischütz* are known to the general German audiences. They are all, therefore, fodder for concept productions.

The *Parsifal* (the production dates from November 1982) was directed by Ruth Berghaus, a renowned East German director. It entirely eliminated the religious symbolism of the original, replacing it with a symbolism based loosely on sexuality (the twentieth-century religion?). The Grail was a lighted circle, the Lance an oversized red arrow. At the third-act climax, Parsifal lugged the arrow onstage and drove it into the circle. Berghaus saw Parsifal as a pure fool, in its literal meaning. He seemed barely aware of what he was doing, at any time, and spent much of his time crawling around the stage. (Crawling, indeed, seems to be endemic to current German stagings: it also pervaded the *Lulu*.) Parsifal fled the sexuality of Kundry, preferring her in a motherly guise, and when he brought back the lance in the first scene of the third act he fled away from it, crawling upstage away from its threat. At the end of the opera he entered the circle with the lance, and stood there crookedly, wearing Amfortas's red crown and a goofy expression. Visually, the moment was one of uncomprehending infantility, but one strongly suggesting another operatic stage moment, similarly located at the end of another opera: that of the Simpleton in *Boris Godunov*.

The opera's visual element was reinforced by the use of primary colors—red, yellow, and blue—in the stage design, a device which worked to best effect in the Flower Maiden scene in Act II. Axel Manthey's sets combined brutalism (the first-act edifice looked like the side of a boiler) with studied drabness (the immense block, peeled back at its edges, which dominated the second act and which was turned to reveal new perspectives). This drabness carried over to the costumes: Parsifal throughout wore a crumpled jumpsuit spray-painted red, while Klingsor sported a business suit, befitting an evil presence. The lighting was largely without subtlety.

The Grail knights were seen as zombie androids, their eyes blacked, feral in petty viciousness and dressed in long black trenchcoats. (The unbelted trenchcoat reaching to the shoe-tops is a pervasive German symbol of evil, summoning up images of the German General Staff.) They came to the "consecration" of the Grail carrying briefcases, and their reaction to its sustenance was to surround it and open their coats (which were yellow on the inside), thus becoming a coven of flashers, whose devotion was one of impotence. Again, it was the visual referents and not the music that were meant to produce the emotional responses.

Berghaus's ideas did not coalesce, except intermittently, though the pictures were often striking. What emerged from this production of *Parsifal,* both in the staging and in the antiseptic reading by conductor Michael Gielen, was the condign mundaneness of the event. This *Parsifal* was deliberately non-emotional (except for Amfortas's melodramatic anguish), deliberately a-religious, non-transcendental. All sentimentality was banished with all uplift. It was a basilisk-eyed *Parsifal*; a stage-consecrational festival drama of the late twentieth century.

The German press (judging from the eighteen reviews published in the Frankfurt Opera magazine *Musiktheater Hinweise*) were highly favorable—"eine grosse Sache" (Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich, *Frankfurter Rundschau*) sums them up. The audience, subscribers and students, gave enthusiastic applause: the performances were all sold out.

The *Lulu* (which I saw on its first night, in January 1982) in Hanover was more naturalistic. It was the work of the young, highly regarded German director Herbert Wernicke, who also designed the unit set—two huge blood-red walls stretching upward and meeting upstage at a black slit. The stage floor itself, widening from upstage to downstage, was constructed on one of the steepest rakes I have seen and was treacherous for everyone, especially the Lulu, who in one scene had to wear high heels. Wernicke pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vided a long "Protokoll" of explanation with the program.

Again, there were changes from the Berg original, which was played in the Friedrich Cerha-completed three-act version. Film was not used at the place Berg indicated; instead, at various pauses between scenes there were films of close-ups of the singer who played Lulu, Cynthia Makris, taken in repose, in anger, while making up, in sexual ecstasy.

Yet the production, far from being saturated in sexual vibrancy, was dispassionate and clinical. Dr. Schön—that central role—was never allowed to develop as a character. He exited as neutrally as he entered (and was not seen again, as Berg wanted, as Jack). His final words—"Der Teufel!"—directed at the Countess Geschwitz, were here directed to empty air. His son Alwa was so busy writing his opera that he played the love scene with Lulu from behind his desk, scribbling away while Lulu lounged upstage. The powerful penultimate line of the scene, crooned by Lulu as she relaxes into Alwa's embraces—"Isn't this the sofa on which your father bled to death?"—was delivered from upstage, as Alwa crawled to the sofa. Schigolch was never characterized, as wheezing derelict or as malign force, but existed as an animate lump. The final scene, one of the strongest culminations in operatic dramaturgy, was treated as anti-climax, with the sex (onstage, rather than behind a door, and downstage) graphic and ice-cold, and Geschwitz a puppet.

The production's strengths lay in the visual rather than the characterizational. Lulu's variety of wigs and costumes suggested exactly that combination of women (Eva, Mignon) each person saw in her, to the extent that it took a few minutes before one realized who Lulu was onstage. Yet this very chameleon approach effaced her own intense being. She existed as six unrelated people rather than as one suggesting multitudes.

What Wernicke gave the audience was a technically slick and visually glamorous simulacrum of *Lulu*.

The *Freischütz* in Stuttgart was a diametrically different type of production. Originally staged in October 1980, it was successful enough to have been presented on German national television, and it continues to attract capacity audiences. It is the work of Achim Freyer, a painter turned set designer turned director.

The emphasis again was visual. Agathe's pose for the *Leise, leise* scene, where she opens the shutters to disclose a starry sky, was modeled on Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Frau am Fenster* (thoughtfully reproduced in the program book), and the singer sang the first verse looking out, with her back to the audience. One of the goblins in the Wolf's Glen scene was given a mask that copied Edvard Munch's *Scream*.

This *Freischütz* was produced as a nineteenth-century morality play of good versus evil (the point reinforced by a puppet show onstage in the first scene) acted on some rustic circus stage of the time, with the single set decorated with the type of naïf painting on wood one sees in provincial towns (and, latterly, at auction houses). Photographs of naïf painting filled the program book.

Freyer carried this studied naïveté through the entire production, often directing singers to assume operatic poses out of some album of past opera stars. The rustic conceit of the production was suggested throughout the theater: tapes of woodland noises could be heard in the corridors, and various artifacts—toadstools, trees, etc.—were scattered about. Strings of bulbs festooned the theater, to be lighted when "good" was in the ascendant and turned off when Samiel and his minions were in control.

There was a good deal of genuine inventiveness and charm in the production, not least in the Wolf's Glen scene, which was staged with the effects the libretto asks for, but in naïf style. Certain moments were memorable: the girls' chorus shyly entering to serenade Agathe, or the hunters in Act III, all dressed individually, as they would have been in life, posing for the famous Hunters Chorus as if for a group photo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

graph. (Prince Ottokar, the benevolent ruler who appears in the last scene, was presented in his current German guise as a fat, effete decadent.) The opera was played super-complete, with all the dialogue and including the explanatory first scene between the Hermit and Agathe, which was written into the libretto but which Weber discarded. This scene has had a current vogue, for it is considered crucial to the understanding of the opera as a morality tale, and it was performed prior to the overture. The scene certainly aids our understanding, as well as complementing the Hermit's only other appearance, in the last act, where he plays the role of *deus ex machina*.

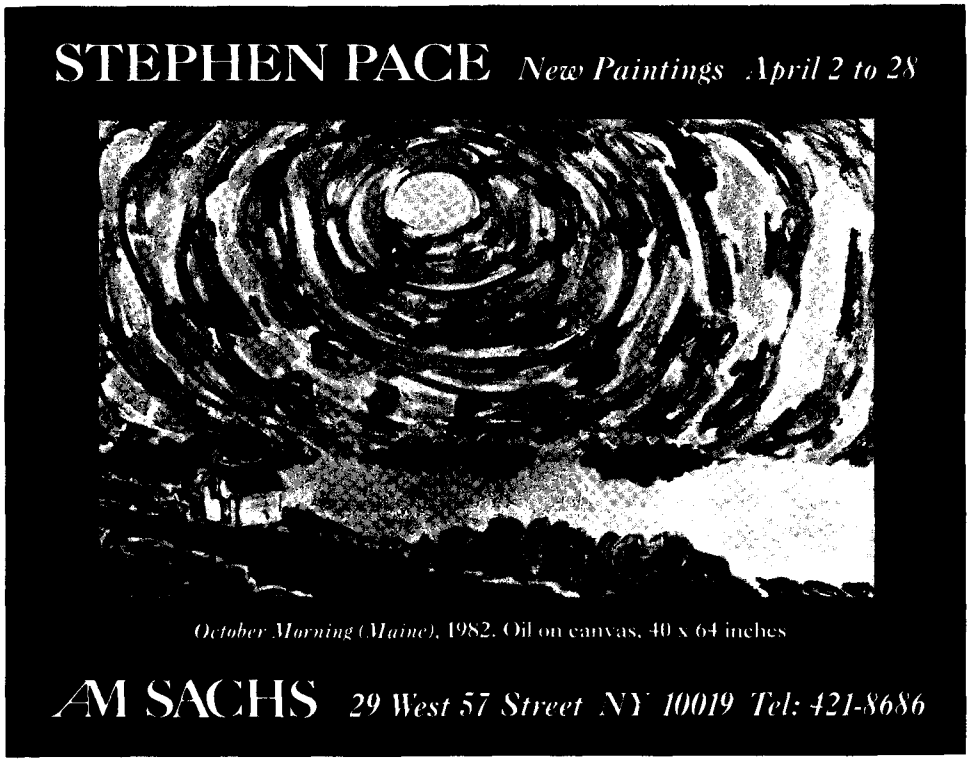
Der Freischütz is an extremely difficult opera to stage successfully today, because of the obviousness of its effects and the creakiness of its plot. Certainly the faux-naïf approach sideslips many of the difficulties, particularly when allied with Freyer's visual sense and inventive wit. It results in a show which appeals both to adults and to children, who were much in evidence in the audience.

Yet, though the grumbles of some German critics that a national treasure was being defaced are exaggerated, there was again about this concept a distancing from the original. We were being tacitly told that we today could no longer accept what Weber and Friedrich Kind had created, and therefore had to see it through a mannered filter. The romanticism which is at the heart of *Freischütz* (c.f., the in this case wise old saw that "the Romantic Age rode in on the horns of the *Freischütz* overture") had to be transformed into quaintness in order to be made palatable. There was a deliberate avoidance of the idea that, difficult as it may be to stage, *Freischütz* could be done straightforwardly. In this respect, the Götz Friedrich staging for Covent Garden (generally dismissed by the English critics) was more successful—though less inventive—in its straightforwardness.

I have not mentioned the music in any of the three operas, neither the singing nor the playing of the orchestra. This is deliberate. Music in all three cases was subordinate. This is not to say that the music was sloppily done. The Hanover pit orchestra had been very thoroughly rehearsed, and delivered a strong performance. Cynthia Makris was likewise an effective Lulu. But, if there were no disastrous voices in any of the operas, there was also precious little individualized singing. In part this was owing to the directors' control and in part to the youth (or lesser vocal stature) of the singers involved. It also derived from a conscious attempt to underplay the "canary fancier" side of opera. Audiences in Germany do not look for singing as a primary goal. The Kundry in *Parsifal* —the American Gail Gilmore—had a good enough voice, but it was severely taxed by Wagner's writing and by the end of the second act had curdled. The audience did not seem to care: they accorded her an ovation, on the strength, I hope, of her acting.

Stuttgart was the only house in which I heard what could be termed international Met-caliber singers. (In Germany, the Munich Opera is considered the most old-fashioned in this respect, and is looked down on by the avant-garde.) The single vocal prize culled, as being distinctive, from the five operas I saw (which included a routine run-through, with one scene cut, of Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* in Wiesbaden) was Catarina Ligendza's *Leise, leise* scene. Here was truly responsive singing, displaying technique (an effortless shading from piano to forte), a fine sense of phrase floated on the breath, and a transmitting of the emotions of the character through the voice's handling of the music. It was applauded, but no more than anything else in the production. My companion compared the performance unfavorably to Elisabeth Grümmer's recording and to various other Agathes, including the earlier Ligendza herself. Quite true. Ligendza's voice, from years of singing Isoldes and Brünnhildes, has developed an unsteadiness, and—though it is large enough to handle the role without giving it the soubrette overtones sometimes heard, thus making it into a second Ännchen—it lacks the easy amplitude of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


STEPHEN PACE New Paintings April 2 to 28
October Morning (Maine), 1982. Oil on canvas, 40 x 64 inches
AM SACHS 29 West 57 Street NY 10019 Tel: 421-8686

breath for the concluding stretto. Here nonetheless was something of the vocal art. Makris may have sung the notes (no mean feat) as Lulu, Manfred Jung may have sung a manly, gruff-voiced Max and Walter Raffeiner a properly juvenile, fresh-sounding Parsifal, but only Ligendza distilled character into the music in her two arias. Wally Toscanini, in a prefatory note to Lanfranco Rasponi's book *The Last Prima Donnas,* says: "Today [the prima donnas] no longer exist, for they have become traveling robots . . . their personality squashed by stage directors." The comment, *Deo gratias,* is not entirely true.

Paradoxically, the only production to depart musically from what the composer asked for was the one which came closest to the spirit of the opera. This was Bernd Alois Zimmermann's operatic setting of J. M. R. Lenz's *Die Soldaten,* also performed by the Frankfurt company in a production dating from June 1981. Zimmermann's opera is fiendishly difficult to mount, for, even in the "easier" version the composer wrote (the visionary Ur-*Soldaten,* which requires its own playing spaces, apparently has not survived), there are directions for movies, for various orchestras on various levels in the auditorium, and various stages. Michael Gielen, Zimmermann's friend and musical champion, who conducted the opera's premiere in 1965, has since the composer's death in 1970 fashioned (with Zimmermann's widow's approval) a version of the opera which can be played on one stage with one pit orchestra (and a jazz band onstage). Speakers surrounding the auditorium and onstage play both electronic and amplified instrumental and vocal sound. This version eliminates the movies.

The version focuses the intensity of the opera. Lenz's tale of the degradation of a *petit bourgeois* girl at the hands of the military in an eighteenth-century barracks town is seen by Zimmermann as a condemnation of the military (and the aristocratic) mind and, by extension, of militarism, which ultimately degrades everything with which it comes into contact.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was not one director listed, but a "production team" of five (including Gielen), and they created a dynamic, vital force, proceeding from both pit and stage, which moved forward inexorably from first to last. Again, a single dominant set was employed: this one of a playing space surrounded by risers on which were piled heaps of old clothes. A six-foot lucite slipper suggested high-class decadence, and the walls behind the risers, which at first looked like slats, became a visual force when they sprang alive, for they were banks of white fluorescent lights. They lit up at the appearance of the barracks soldiers, who were not dressed in eighteenth-century uniforms but in an anonymous adaptation of current German military garb. This updating extended to others: the Countess de la Roche was costumed in a dress from the proper period (thus suggesting the aristocracy) but with a lace bodice from the nineteenth century and a cloche hat from the 1920s.

The scenes in which the soldiers appeared —notably the first scene of the second act— were superior examples of the harnessing of the totality of stage forces to one purpose. The depersonalized, jejune brutality of the barracks soldier was brilliantly presented, both in its covert menace and its overt "macho" silliness. It played directly from within the context of the current German intellectual pacifist (and not a little nihilistic) position. The stage crackled with an energy I saw in no other production.

Zimmermann's music is extremely accomplished. *Die Soldaten* is considered in Germany the best opera in that language since *Lulu*, and it is hard to argue against that estimate. (The only production in the United States—in Boston in 1982, by Sarah Caldwell's Boston Opera—was close to a travesty.) It is true that some of the devices of the early *Klangfarben* school—the intermixing of electronic and "live" sound, the attempts to graft jazz onto an operatic-symphonic texture, and the numbing welter of sound for its own sake—sound a bit dated today. It is also true that *Die Soldaten* is too tied to the apron-strings of *Wozzeck*. It is a look at barracks life from the underside, in which the individual is isolated and ground down by alien forces. Character is exaggerated into psychosis, and the central role, the young girl who becomes the camp whore, is named Marie. Zimmermann writes a requiem for her, as Berg wrote one for Wozzeck.

Nonetheless, Zimmermann has written an opera of musical and dramatic stature. The composition is carefully crafted, and the expressive portions beautiful. Zimmermann resembles Berg in that he can bend the most intractable serial formulae to his own uses, and he manages to handle the disjunct vocal line with ease. The scene between the Countess de la Roche and Marie at the end of the third act does for this type of music what the trio at the end of Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* did for that. Finally, Zimmermann has employed the technique of "collage," which he was among the first composers to popularize, with consummate skill. The various imported items sound integral and not pasted on, yet Zimmermann's keen sense of orchestral balance and color shades the music constantly, giving echoes of other musics without reproducing them.

The power of the opera, which is cumulative, was realized by the performance, and if *Die Soldaten* is, as has been suggested, an epigone, its merits are no less, and those merits were captured.

But more, I think, was captured. For the first time I was gripped less by a concept or an idea—though both were present—than by the thing itself. There was a directness and a unity, extending from score to pit to stage to audience. No scrims of reflection intruded. One could doubtless realize this opera a dozen other ways, but at the time this way provided an immediate, sustained presence.

It may come down to a question of belief. This production team obviously believed deeply in the message of Zimmermann's work, in a way that none of the other directors believed in theirs, except as representative of established German classics. Their efforts, then, were reflexive, and not dynamic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In a conversation with Eckermann (May 6, 1827), Goethe said, "The Germans are really strange people. With their profound thoughts and ideas, which they seek everywhere and project onto everything, they make life harder for themselves than they should. Oh, that at long last you had the courage for once *to yield yourselves to your impressions,* to let yourselves be delighted, let yourselves be moved, let yourselves be elevated, yes, let yourselves be taught and inspired and encouraged for something great; only do not always think that everything is vain if it is not some abstract thought or idea!"

Perhaps the perversion of this directness of emotional response in the Germany of the 1930s has led to the reinforcement of the constipated attitude Goethe describes; perhaps the Germans cannot divorce idea from action and idea has taken over in their manic scrabbling to understand and exorcize their own past. Whatever the explanation, there is an intellectual gulf which stands between creator and audience. It has produced, in opera, a strange hybrid in which the work exists pristine, and its interpretation twists it into something else.

We may be on the threshhold of the next, necessary step. That is the one in which the work itself will be treated with exactly the same creative daring that has up to now been accorded only to the visual. (Wieland Wagner made a tentative step in this direction in his last years at Bayreuth by daring to cut *Götterdämmerung* to suit his purposes. Peter Brook likewise eliminated Bizet's exquisite orchestration and fashioned his own sound for his *Carmen.*)

If so, at least then the director would have the courage to take onto himself fully the onus of creator, so that the opera could then be judged as his, and not as some variation of the standard. And perhaps, finally, this would generate a vitality of purpose and a directed energy which, all too often, was absent in all but one of the productions I attended.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books

Michelangelo on the couch

by Charles Dempsey

Michelangelo's public career, after a brief apprenticeship with Ghirlandaio, began around 1490 at the age of fifteen, when he left home and was taken into the household of Lorenzo de'Medici. There he acquired his convictions concerning the purposes of his art, understanding for the first time its potential for a true nobility. Lorenzo possessed political abilities of a high but not extraordinary order. Within two years of his death in 1492 his family was expelled from Florence (when Michelangelo also fled the city), and not long afterward his line was extinguished (and commemorated by Michelangelo in the Medici Chapel, where the last of his male descendants lie buried). His policies led in part to the French decision to invade Italy, an event that was to keep the country in a continuous state of war, that was to lead to the sack of Rome itself by Spanish troops in 1527, and that incidentally was to lead to the suppression of Florentine freedom and the creation in 1532 of an autocratic duchy in Tuscany. Michelangelo, who also became a familiar in the households of the great Renaissance popes, led his life at the center of this stage, and his art and personality were deeply touched by the political turmoils of the time. He was also formed by Lorenzo's cultural policies, in which Lorenzo's greatness, and the immortality of his name, appears. Lorenzo was himself a fine poet and a great patron of the new learning, a promoter of the vernacular language and literature as well as the classics, and the sponsor of Marsilio Ficino, who was the father of Renaissance Neoplatonism, Cristoforo Landino, whose important commentary on Dante certainly impressed Michelangelo, and the great poet and philologist Politian, who helped the young artist conceptualize the subject for one of his earliest sculptures.

Lorenzo's greatness does not derive simply from the fact that he was a patron who spent a great deal of money on the arts and scholarship; it derives as well from his commitment to an intellectual and social ideal. When Michelangelo entered his house, Renaissance humanists—professional men of letters—were engaged in a battle with scholastic logicians, who were professional philosophers and theologians. Superficially this battle might appear as a dispute between academic departments. In fact, it was fought over the fundamental intellectual issue of the age, and it is this that gives humanism its historical importance. The issue was freedom, the freedom of the human intellect to uphold whatever it might discover through rational investigation and representation. In defense of such freedom the humanists argued that the historical analysis of language took precedence over its use in philosophical demonstration and that no text—not even the Bible itself—was exempt from philological examination and emendation. They also made the extraordinary claim that the representational techniques of the arts of language, founded in rhetoric and poetics,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were themselves expressions of an intellectual virtue, that they were a kind of truly philosophical dialectic that was superior to the logical dialectic of the schoolmen. Art itself became a means of rational investigation, and artistic *inventio* (discovery) the means of realizing the results of individual exploration into truth. From the time of Alberti it had been argued that such discovery was common to the arts of letters and the visual arts. Indeed, the argument was the basis for the familiar Renaissance doctrine of *ut pictura poesis.* For Michelangelo this put his art in an extraordinarily privileged position and meant that its purpose was not merely to represent a truth that is known, though perhaps concealed, but to act as a means by which human virtue, the strength of the individual mind and will, might discover and represent its own idea of truth.

Michelangelo expressed this concept of his art with special clarity in the famous sonnet "Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto," the first quatrain of which states: "The best artist has no conception that a single piece of marble does not contain within its block, and this may be discovered only by the hand that is obedient to the intellect." In *Michelangelo: A Psychoanalytic Study of his Life and Images,*[1] Robert S. Liebert, who writes as a professional psychoanalyst and clinical professor of psychology, doubts that Michelangelo believed this about himself, suggesting instead that while he may have found the notion of the sovereign power of his intellect "comforting" he was in fact denying a creative role to his emotions. This is both unhistorical—all Renaissance artists believed that art was a rational habit of the intellect—and trivializing. The spiritual drama of Michelangelo's life, which was of a tragic dimension, was acted around his passionate commitment to that belief, and he paid dearly for it. Michelangelo lived to see the humanist ideals of his youth challenged and defeated during the religious conflicts of his age and the ennobling concept of artistic discovery subverted into the empty rhetoric of the Jesuit schools. He himself became one of the first great victims of the Counter-reformation. When his *Last Judgment* was unveiled in 1542 it was subjected to unprecedented attack precisely because Michelangelo was perceived to have vaunted his art—his own idea—at the expense of the eternal truth of his subject. The cleric Gilio of Fabriano, in an influential dialogue that anticipated the sharp restraints shortly to be placed on artistic freedom by the Council of Trent, wrote that poetry and theology are strictly opposed, and when Michelangelo painted an important article of faith it was his business to follow the theologians, not the inventive techniques of the poets. Every pope from its unveiling to the end of the century was subjected to strong curial pressure to have the *Last Judgment* destroyed. Michelangelo, a profoundly religious man, was shaken to the depths of his being, and in the twenty years of life left to him constantly reiterated his terror that he had placed his faith in art to the peril of his immortal soul. The same terror was soon to be visited upon the poet Tasso because of his *Gerusalemme liberata,* and in the next century Galileo was to be called to account because he too maintained that his own investigations into truth resulted in actual knowledge of the true. As Cardinal Bellarmine wrote, it was one thing to assume for mathematical purposes that the earth revolved around the sun, but quite another to maintain this as a fact, since this would be contrary to Scripture and an offense to the faith. In each case the freedom of intellectual inquiry and representation was the real issue. Michelangelo's soul was staked upon it.

In view of this issue, and of the heroism of Michelangelo's conscious beliefs, which he stood for with great courage and represented with God-like majesty, it is dispiriting to be told by Dr. Liebert that the psychodrama of the *Last Judgment* was created out of retributive fantasies of damnation

1 *Michelangelo: A Psychoanalytic Study of His Life and Images* by Robert S. Liebert, M.D. Yale University Press, 447 pages, $22.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOVELS
by J. Inchardi

$13 each

An American Trilogy

Lines On The Death Of A Fisherman

Three Jews In A Tub

Dreamship

An Allegorical Trilogy

Yurros

A Paper Toy

Intercurse

A Demonic Trilogy

Jehovah Mafioso

Saturn Maru

Drek Shlak

Order by mail from **Sirius Books**
P.O. Box 177, Freeport, Maine 04032

brought on by the guilt attending Michelangelo's matricidal, patricidal, and homosexual impulses. It is somehow unedifying to learn that the Sistine ceiling "represents an extraordinary achievement in the creative sublimation of homosexual longings," longings provoked by the circumstance that Julius II was "obsessed by his vision of driving the French from Italy, not concerned with fulfilling Michelangelo's psychological needs."

To be capable of writing such things is to be incapable of ironical reflection, and Dr. Liebert's analysis is very literal-minded indeed. His thesis rests upon the assumption that Michelangelo's childhood was unusually unhappy, although nothing of the very little we know about it unequivocally supports this. It rests further on the questionable supposition that Michelangelo, though possessed of homosexual tendencies, led a completely chaste life. His means of analyzing Michelangelo's images is twofold, first to give us his own reading of their expression and the subconscious imagery latent in them (the shoulder, pectoral muscle, and breast of the *Leda,* for example, he reads as male genitalia), and second to argue that the meaning of Michelangelo's various artistic sources was unconsciously absorbed into his own images (the infants Christ and St. John in the *Taddei tondo* seem to derive from the children of Medea sculptured on an ancient sarcophagus and so embody anxieties about death and the emotionally antagonistic, indeed murderous, mother sublimated in the image of the nurturing Madonna). Already a host of problems arise for Dr. Liebert.

How accurate an observer is he of Michelangelo's art? And how detached? He describes the Christ child in the *Taddei tondo,* for example, as frightened by the goldfinch held by St. John and trying to climb into the Madonna's lap for protection and comfort, while she assumes an air of detachment. Yet the child is clearly jumping *out* of his mother's lap, and she just as clearly is holding up her right hand in order to restrain the infant St. John. Similarly, he describes the Leda of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leda and the Swan as in a state of utter passivity, and also sees her as only a minor variation of the statue of *Night* in the Medici Chapel. Yet never was woman more actively engaged in sexual intercourse. Leda has rolled over onto her right haunch, so that both buttocks are visible, and with left thigh flexed she casts her leg across the back of the swan, pulling him down and into her. Nor, as any reader may verify for himself, does her pose agree in any particular with that of the torpid, though troubled, *Night*. The sexuality of the *Leda* is explicit, and that of the *Night* is not latent, but specifically alluded to iconographically. A mask appears at her shoulder, and the word *larva* in both Latin and the Italian of Michelangelo's day means both "mask" and "phantasm," referring to the frightening apparitions of ghosts and the nightmare. Ancient and Renaissance physicians were as aware as was Freud himself that the specters of the nightmare were often sexual in nature, a phenomenon they explained as occurring in a spirit obsessed with material existence. The sexuality, the heroic corporeality of the figures in the Medici Chapel, as well as of the so-called *Slaves* for the tomb of Julius II, is not a quality that Michelangelo sought to suppress, but is a part of the highly serious idea he intended to express about the human condition.

A seriously complicating factor for Dr. Liebert's method of assuming a latent transferring of associations from Michelangelo's sources into his own works is the fundamental Renaissance doctrine of mimesis, or imitation, of artistic models. Sir Joshua Reynolds put it succinctly in the *Fifteenth Discourse* when he advised students at the Royal Academy to imitate all of the figures of Michelangelo's in the same way that he had himself imitated the ancient sculptures, first copying them and then changing the purpose of the figures without changing the attitude. Reynolds himself gave as an example Tintoretto's changing of Michelangelo's *Sampson Killing a Philistine* into a *Jupiter tonans,* but the ways in which Michelangelo adapted the figure of Leda from an ancient

important
works by
butler
chagall
dubuffet
giacometti
mac iver
mason
millares
miró
riopelle
rouan
saura
zao wou-ki

pierre matisse gallery

41 east 57 street
new york

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sarcophagus both for his *Leda and the Swan* and the very different *Night* would repay much subtler and more sophisticated (not to say accurately described) analysis than Dr. Liebert has given them. But I do not want to belabor the historical naïveté of his book (although I cannot refrain from pointing out that a grammar school is not the equivalent of our high school, but a Latin school that students conventionally entered at about age six; and that Michelangelo most certainly did not represent the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone in the *Last Judgment,* but referred to the role of works in salvation through the rosary, the instruments of the martyred saints, and the books displayed by the trumpeting angels). Just as serious, and even more so in view of the psychoanalytical foundation of the book, is Dr. Liebert's unaccountable disinclination to take into account, or even to acknowledge, the techniques and methodological debates of psychohistory and psychocriticism.

The names and ideas of Erikson, Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida, much less the myriad contemporary followers, modifiers, revisers, and appliers of their ideas, are nowhere to be found in this book. In his introduction Dr. Liebert acknowledges in one sentence only that "it behooves us to consider the connection between the unconscious intention of the artist and the unconscious response of the beholder," but for some reason he declines to do so, casting himself instead into the "relatively neutral and anonymous person of the analyst." By adopting this *persona,* undoubtedly from force of professional habit, he begs the primary question of psychocriticism, namely the issue of validation. In therapy the overdetermination of the symptom may be mitigated by various associative repetitions and by the confirming nature of transference leading in the end to a cure. But the work of art, whether visual or literary, remains overdetermined, and any given interpretation—including the intended meaning of the artist himself—remains subject to the contingencies of any other interpretation. Dr. Liebert has not confronted himself as beholder, much less the tension between this position and his posture as analyst, and because he has not done so he is especially vulnerable to the embarrassment of having represented himself in the guise of the other he wished to represent. His book is of limited theoretical interest, being frankly a work of applied science. As for Michelangelo, I would strongly urge seeking a second opinion.

The skull of Raphael

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Italian Journey 1786-1788. Translated by W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer. North Point Press, 508 pages, $16.50

reviewed by Vernon Young

"When I arrived in Italy I felt reborn; now I feel re-educated . . . . When I get home you will judge for yourselves how well I have used my eyes. My old habit of sticking to the objective and concrete has given me an ability to read things at sight, so to speak . . . . Angelica [Kaufmann] has paid me the compliment of saying that she knows very few people in Rome who *see* better in art than I do."

Goethe's letters from Italy, which make up the greater part of this compilation[1] (originally published in installments as *Italienische Reise*), were increasingly punctuated by these confident testimonials to himself as an *Augenmensch,* a seeing eye in the chapels and galleries of art, a daily improving connoisseur convinced that he was on the track of those "laws of Nature" which would enable him to explain the "laws of Art." A week after relaying Angelica Kaufmann's flattery to a friend in Germany, Goethe visited the Accademia di San Luca, where "the skull of

1 This English edition was first published by Pantheon in 1962. W. H. Auden's translation, while lucid, is unresourceful and surprisingly redundant. Redundancy is the characteristic of Goethe we can most readily spare.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Raphael" was preserved. "This relic seems to me to be authentic. An exquisite bone structure in which a beautiful soul could walk about in comfort . . . . as I left I thought how all lovers of Nature and Art would value a cast of this skull, if it were in any way possible to get one made." Before leaving Rome he arranged to have a cast made for him and sent to Germany. In later years, he often "looked and reflected" upon it. The skull was not authentic.

On the same occasion, he was further delighted at the Accademia by "Raphael's picture of the Madonna appearing to St. Luke, so that he may paint her in all her divine grace and beauty. At some distance from the painting evangelist stands Raphael himself, still in his youth. It would be impossible to express more charmingly the way in which a man finds himself drawn to a particular vocation." The painting was not by Raphael.

So much for "sticking to the objective and the concrete"! The truth is that, when it came to art, the great Goethe, at the age of thirty-seven, thoroughly enslaved by the "Antique" ideal, couldn't tell chalk from cheese. Any graduate student of art history today knows more about the subject than Goethe and most of his contemporaries, not because he has been endowed with instinctively superior insight but because his taste and his knowledge has been conditioned by the researches of men most of whom weren't born when in 1786 Goethe set out for Italy with Nature, Reason, and Winckelmann as his principal guides. All of us today who know which paintings and buildings to look for, and where, and why, owe an everlasting debt to Ruskin and Burckhardt, to Wolfflin and Berenson, to Elie Faure and Spengler and Malraux, to Lionello Venturi and Sir Kenneth Clark.

Goethe was not unaware of how much he didn't know but he was in thrall to an insidious habit; he invariably separated his intellectual deductions from the euphoria he experienced when confronted by the category of art he had consented to admire on principle: the Classical, which, to judge by his rare superlatives, had prepared him only for such *painters* as Mantegna, Veronese, and Raphael. Yet he recognized, on viewing the "immense wealth" and the "scattered fragments" of Rome, the urgent need for distinguishing epochs and tracing the history of styles. "You must ask the right questions," he told himself. "Judgment is impossible without a knowledge of historical development." Whereupon, in the next breath, he asks himself the *wrong* question: "What was the process by which these incomparable artists [the ancient Greeks] evolved from the human body the circle of their godlike shapes, a perfect circle from which not one essential, incidental or transitional feature was lacking?"

No matter where he started from, Goethe always arrived at the Apollo Belvedere. He vitiated the possibility of ever distinguishing among epochs by assuming that perfection had already been achieved (in the *sculpture* of a single epoch and in the architecture of Palladio, who alone had recovered antique purity!). However much he had helped initiate the Romantic temper with *The Sorrows of Werther,* however far he was thereafter to extend his genius, in 1786 the man who was writing *Faust* was totally indifferent to Faustian art. At the conscious level he was impenitently an eighteenth-century mind, insisting that he "always looked at landscape with the eye of a geologist, suppressing [his] imagination and emotions in order to preserve [his] faculty for clear and unbiased observation." If this drab declaration accounts for the many inhibited moments when he falls back on the stock evasion "mere words cannot describe," it is not an unfailing formula. Certainly he had an eye for landscape, elemental or fruitful, that did not halt at the border of geology and he certainly had an eye, and ear, for the people he observed in the *palazzi* or in the popular theater of Venice, in the salons of Rome and in the isolated villages of Sicily. But he learned slowly that circumstances, and scenery, alter cases, that his observations of the particular were forever giving the lie to the general conclusions he was anxiously striving to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

embrace. As in the arts, so in society. When he had been in Italy for a year, understandably changing his opinion about the generic Italian in every province, he settled for this conclusion, in Rome, where there had lately been a local epidemic of ferocious killing: "All I can say about the Italians is this: they are children of Nature, who for all the pomp and circumstance of their religion and art, are not a whit different from what they would be if they were still living in forests and caves." (Note how the meaning of "Nature" has here undergone a metamorphosis.)

The seeming finality of this verdict did not prevent him, some months later, from reverting to the illusion of the period that the contemplation of beauty infallibly makes men virtuous. To live in Rome (he is convinced on the eve of leaving it), where antique statues face you every day with man in his most human form, is to be "permeated with their presence until it becomes impossible ever again to relapse into barbarism." (It follows that if you have Raphael's genius your skull will have an exquisite bone structure to complement your soul—and God help a Caravaggio!). The sorry thing is that he more often suppressed his imagination and his emotions—and oddly enough his otherwise driving curiosity—when he was within reach of the "immense wealth" of art that he glimpsed in Rome but that was by no means confined to that city. Having visited Padua, Venice, and Assisi, where he had contrived to ignore the presences of Giotto, Donatello, and Tintoretto (to name only his outstanding blank pages), he was so eager to get to Rome that only with fretful patience did he waste a day by entering Florence. Of the city in Europe perhaps most densely crammed with monuments of Western painting and sculpture, he had this—nothing further—to say.

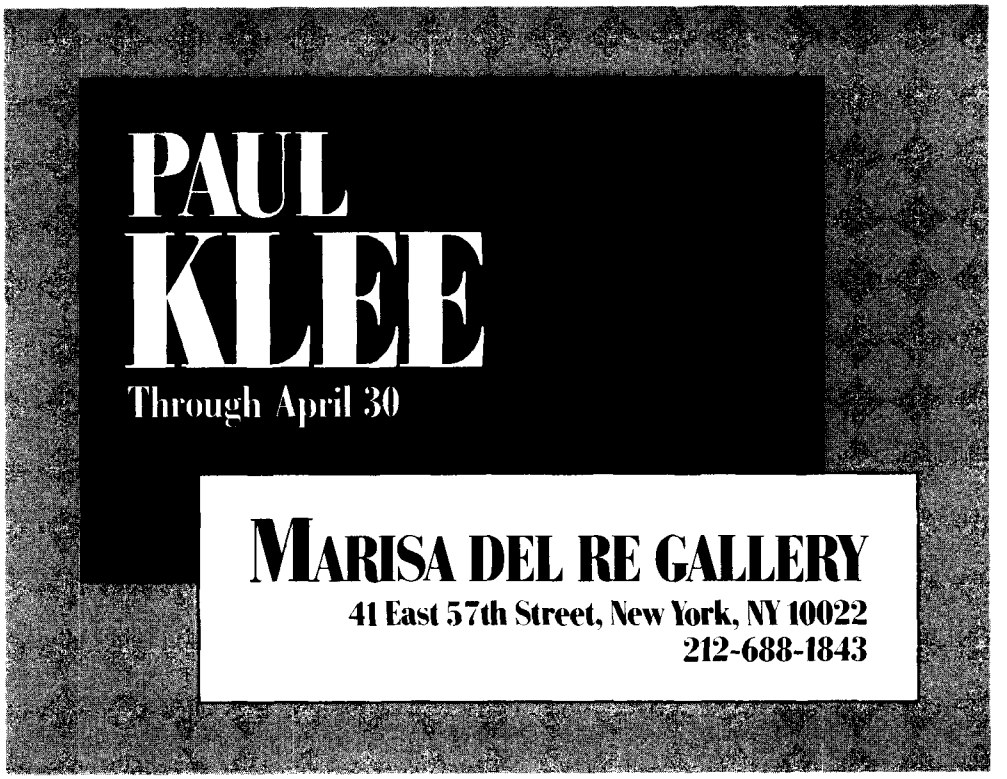
> I took a quick walk through the city to see the Duomo and the Battistero. Once more, a completely new world opened up before me but I did not wish to stay long. The location of the Boboli Gardens is marvellous. I hurried out of the city as quickly as I entered it.

If at this juncture we are not to abandon Goethe in a fit of exasperation we need to remind ourselves that his shocking rejection was probably a commonplace. We are reading a bland chapter in the history of taste. If Angelica Kaufmann's compliment was sincere it indicates what the climate of opinion must have been among the cognoscenti of Italy in the 1780s, dominated as they were by the Classical prejudice of a century.

Paradoxically, the French Revolution and the ascendancy of Napoleon renewed the obsession, if in modified forms, by evoking the spirit of Republican Rome, which in turn inspired the Philhellenic movement, animated by Lord Byron's propaganda for the liberation of Greece. Thirty years after Goethe's willed indifference to Florence, Byron echoed it, confessing to a correspondent, before leaving Venice for Rome, that he had not the least curiosity about Florence but supposed he "must see it for the sake of the Venus, etc. etc." He was as good as his word, reporting that in April of 1817 he had remained in the city "but a day . . . . I went to the two galleries [presumably the Uffizi and the Pitti Palace] from which one returns drunk with beauty. The Venus is more for admiration than love." This is scarcely less begrudging than Goethe's whirlwind excursion, although Byron did perfunctorily mention Michelangelo's *Night* in the Medici chapel. Of paintings he said little more than Goethe. Conceivably he was too drunk with beauty to recall the source of his intoxication.

If the author of *Don Juan,* notorious for the audacities he provoked from an uninhibited empiricism, could be intimidated by political bias into visiting Florence only for "the Venus, etc. etc.," we can imagine how few loving and disinterested students of early Renaissance art there must have been in any Italian city before the end of the century, how few spectators in Florence alone there probably were who might have sensed with a thrill of discovery *what* they were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

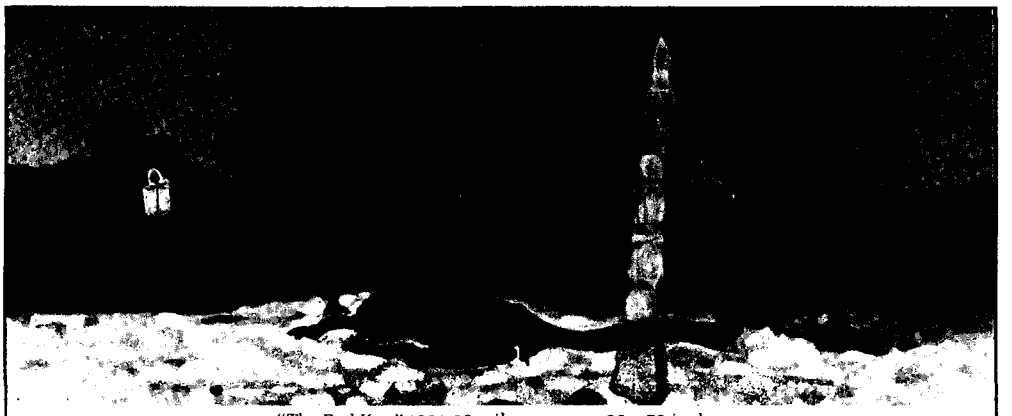


looking at in, let us say, the art of Fra Angelico, Lorenzetti, Masaccio, Ghiberti, Donatello—to go no further.

And we can perhaps begin to understand how Goethe, with earnest intentions, deprived himself of more art than he ever assimilated while he juggled those confounding dualities—Reason and Emotion, Observation and Instinct, Imagination and Science—and engaged himself in unreal problems, such as having to reconcile the serenity of Raphael with the Vesuvian power of Michelangelo. An amusing contretemps of his divisive method of scrutiny was his discovery of a leaning tower in Bologna. I presume that it leaned for the same reason as the one that has survived in Pisa. It was insecurely based and the foundations shifted. But Goethe's "clear and unbiased observation" led him to examine the tower close up and, after confirming that the layers of brick ran horizontally, he proposed an explanation that has stronger magic. During the time of civil feuds, every powerful family built its own tower as a point of honor and a symbol of prestige. Since in due time, so runs his argument, perpendicular towers became commonplace, someone yawned—and deliberately built a leaning one!

There are reasons for visiting Italy other than seeing works of art. (There are none better.) If *Italian Journey* were wholly a record of Goethe's solecisms on art and architecture it would scarcely be worth a Mass. But the sum is more engrossing than the parts. Goethe as traveler is much more reliable than Goethe as aesthete. He conveys with tireless (sometimes tiresome) attention to person, place, and weather, the sheerly physical experience of traversing the peninsula from the Alps to Sicily. Better than any contemporary travelogue I can remember, his day-to-day record reminds us that to have made one's way from Verona to Vesuvius (which he ascended in between eruptions) was to have observed a radically different country from the one we visit now: as anywhere in 1786, the tyranny of space prolonged the hours and magnified the innumerable encounters with personality that in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"The Red Key," 1981-82, oil on canvas, 30 x 73 inches

ELISE ASHER

"Outscapes"
April 12 through 30

INGBER GALLERY

460 West Broadway, New York 10012 (212) 674-0101

our century, for better or worse, are eliminated. Today you can hop to Taormina or Syracuse with no distinct impression that you have left Italy. In Goethe's day, you *sailed* to Palermo (from Naples, flying a white flag against pirates) and in the wilds of Sicily you were submitted to discomforts that surpassed the worst of those endemic to the mainland, and from these there was no rapid escape.

Goethe was the least neurotic of travelers and his Sicilian narrative is a triumph of euphemism over misgiving. Enthralled by such diversities as mulberry trees, shell-limestone formations, a flank of Etna looming in the sky (its summit and base obscured by clouds), the Temple of Segesta, and landscapes under a full moon or flooded with sunsets unrivaled in his memory, he managed to rise above the manifold miseries we infer from a few mordant passages, in which he makes no attempt to modify the desolation. Often he struggled on muleback in sopping weather through a daytime hell of uninhabited and roadless country only to arrive at a village where there was no inn, as at Castrogiovanni, where he and his devoted guide were confined to "a room with plastered stone floor and shutters but no window, so that either we had to sit in the dark or put up with the drizzling rain from which we had just escaped." In Messina (destroyed by an earthquake three years before) he was treated to a "terrifying picture of a devastated city . . . . We rode our mules through ruin after ruin till we came to our inn . . . the only house which had been rebuilt and from its upper floor we looked out over a wasteland . . . . Outside the premises of this sort of farmstead, there was no sign of man or beast. The silence during the night was uncanny. The doors could neither be locked or barred and there was as little provision for human guests as in any stable."

We might well regret that he was preoccupied with so many personal projects and with so many demands on his attention that he only touched in passing the subject for which he had a predilection quite unusual in his Apollonian century: the significance of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ritual, especially when it involved sublimated rehearsals of death.[2] This is the only subject where his perception can be described as psychological; it is certainly the only one with which, as unlikely as it sounds, he can be said to intersect the Italian territory of D. H. Lawrence. It is illustrated with eloquent detail (so eloquent that I am moved to believe he composed the greater part of it at the time he published the final section of this journal, forty years later) in his synopsis of the Roman Carnival, which takes place before Lent and which was then virtually confined to a single street, the Corso. Like all pre-Lenten carnivals, the Roman occasion was one of complete license: the abolition of social distinctions, the donning of masks, the performance of derisive theatricals, and at its climax the defusing of latent aggressions in a mass crescendo of—candle-snuffing.

> It becomes everyone's duty to carry a lighted candle and the favorite imprecation of the Romans, *Sia ammazzato,* is heard repeatedly on all sides. *Sia ammazzato chi non parta moccolo!:* "Death to anyone not carrying a candle." This is what you say to others, while at the same time you try to blow out their candles. No matter who it belongs to, friend or stranger, you try to blow out the nearest candle, or light your own from it first and then blow it out . . . . All ages and classes contend furiously. Carriage steps are climbed; no chandelier and scarcely a paper lantern is safe. A boy blows out his father's candle, shouting *Sia ammazzato il Signore Padre!* In vain the old man scolds him . . . . the boy claims the freedom of the evening and curses his father all the more vehemently.

As everyone gathers at the center of the Corso, the crush and heat of the heedless roaring mob and the smoke from a multitude of candles being blown out and relit make for a Saturnalia of nightmare proportions. Meditating on this exuberant if suffocating revelry (on Ash Wednesday, he claimed), Goethe astutely read the Carnival as a consummate version of *la strada*:

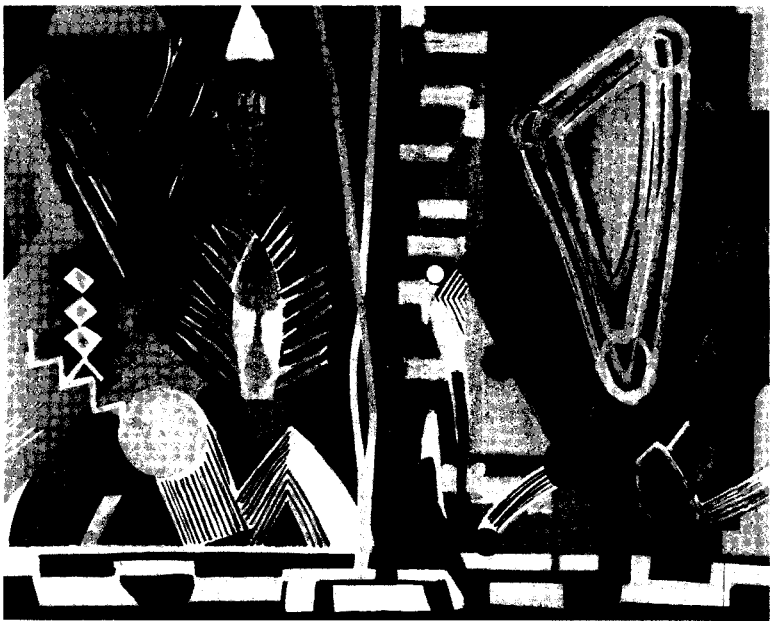
> . . . a vulgar Pulcinella recalls to us the pleasures of love to which we owe our existence; a Baubo [bawdy nurse] profanes in a public place the mysteries of birth and motherhood, and the many lighted candles remind us of the ultimate ceremony. The long narrow Corso, packed with people, recalls to us no less the road of our earthly life. There, too, a man is both actor and spectator; there too, in disguise or out of it, he has too little room to himself and whether in a carriage or on foot can only advance by inches . . . . life, taken as a whole, is like the Roman Carnival, unpredictable, unsatisfactory and problematic.

Perhaps, after all, Goethe's reflections on "the skull of Raphael" had led him to a more authentic conclusion than any he might have reached in the domain of the fine arts.

2 During his Italian interlude, Goethe was rewriting *Iphigenie* and working on *Tasso* (begun nine years before), on *Egmont,* (begun eleven years before), and on *Faust* (begun eighteen years before).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALAN SINGER



The Nature of the Imagination
April 16th through May 7, 1983

GALLERY 120 REPRESENTS:

John Bradford	Richard McBee
Gregory Crane	Mark Olin
Karen Dean	Peter Schwarzberg
Carol Heft	Anthony Siani*
Peter Heinemann*	Jacob Silberman
Benjamin Martinez	Alan Singer

THURSDAY THROUGH SUNDAY 12 TO 6
(212) 925-4954

Gallery 120

120 LAFAYETTE ST. (AT CANAL)
NEW YORK CITY

*Works by Peter Heinemen and Anthony Siani can be viewed through May 14 at One Penn Plaza (250 West 34th St.) in the exhibition "Eight Visions", curated by Carter Ratcliff and Carola van den Houten.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fiction chronicle

The end of the world

by Joshua Gilder

Writers writing about writers have just about exhausted themselves as subject matter, and it's not likely that D. M. Thomas's new novel, *Ararat,* will revive the genre. Thomas has chosen as his central character an author much like himself, Sergei Rozanov, a poet and sometime novelist. The fact that Rozanov then decides to improvise three different stories, each of which also concerns a poet or novelist, and that one of these characters decides to write a poem about an *improvisatore,* a poet skilled at spur-of-the-moment improvisations on a given theme—all this only compounds the problem. One multiplies the commonplace and simply gets more of it.

Ararat's overwrought eroticism and detailed descriptions of genocide will be familiar to readers of Thomas's previous novel, *The White Hotel*; but whereas in that work each had its place and was organic to the development of the story, here it all seems to have become slightly unglued. Images of sexuality and mass murder tumble through the narrative with no more seeming direction or purpose than Rozanov's fevered imagination.

Two of the main characters Rozanov creates are male (the one woman has only a short, perfunctory improvisation at the end); both are named Victor Surkov and both are running a temperature through much of their stories. Rozanov, like all good Russians, is a tortured soul. Like all successful writers (or successful writers writing about writers), he expends the better part of his Angst on who he is or is not bedding down with at the moment. Through all the improvisations run the unsettled, disorderly facts of his own life: the wife who bores him sexually but without whose presence he cannot write; the mistress whose suspected affair alternately excites him and drives him to despair. In his delirium the roles of wife and mistress change and become confused, but the tale is always the same—one of agonizing ambivalence.

The fever mounts when the Victor Surkov of the first improvisation, which accounts for more than half the novel, is ordered by his doctor to take an ocean voyage with a boatload of young female Olympic athletes. Soon he's sleeping with one especially young gymnast, proposing marriage to her and marrying a Turk instead to get out of it. But it isn't all rolling in bunk berths: scenes of the holocaust vie with sex for his febrile attention. On board he meets a man named Finn, a kind of genocidal Everyman. Finn stalks the decks like the bad conscience of the human race; in one way or another it seems he has participated in every mass murder of the twentieth century. He recounts in detail the Turkish slaughters of Armenians, matter of factly giving body counts as he goes along. ("In the province of Dirachekir we got rid of 570,000. An unbelievable figure isn't it? But I assure you it is true." Solicitously he asks, ". . . am I boring you?") He was at Babi Yar, Dachau,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

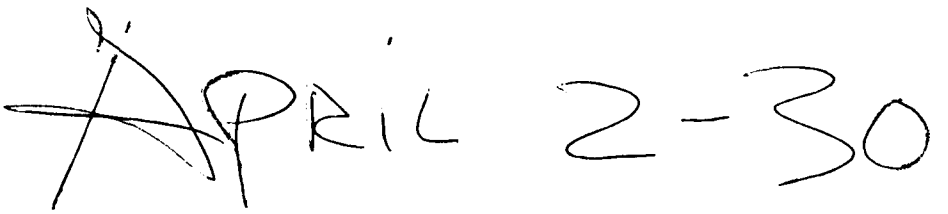
Birkenau, Belsen, Auschwitz, Treblinka. Surkov tries to avoid him but Finn feels a compulsion to tell his story. He knocks on the writer's cabin door at night, apologizing for the late hour. "I fancied a chat," he says. "I didn't tell you I served in the Ukraine in the early Thirties, during the deportation of the Kulaks . . ."

Finding a moment free of this specter, Surkov writes down a poem, "Egyptian Nights" (D. M. Thomas's translation and continuation of the unfinished Pushkin poem by that name), about an impoverished Italian *improvisatore* trying his luck in the salons of the Russian aristocracy. His most notable performance is on the story of Cleopatra and her lovers. (She grants them one night's bliss on the condition that they submit to a swift beheading in the morning.)

Ararat's structure is like an hallucinatory game of chinese boxes: we have here a story within a story within a story within a novel, all trading facts and fancies according to the narrator's distempered imagination. The game, however, seems to serve more than anything else as a distraction from the issues at hand. One feels that Thomas chose such a constantly receding form because the significance of his themes was constantly eluding him. What Freud referred to in *Civilization and Its Discontents* as the eternal struggle of the two "Heavenly Powers," Eros and Thanatos (roughly, the forces of life and death), continues to be Thomas's subject, but it appears that he's become disoriented in the heat and smoke of battle. *Ararat* never works its way beyond the point reached in the first two sections of *The White Hotel*; it is as if Thomas/Rozanov/Surkov remained locked in the initial morbid eroticism of that novel's heroine.

What *Ararat* clearly needs is professional help. It was the figure of Freud, seen through correspondence and a fictional case history of the heroine, that allowed Thomas to open up his obsessions and reach a deeper level of meaning in *The White Hotel*. Freud presided over that book like a healing force, bringing the injured life of the heroine (and in a sense of the century) into wholeness. It

MENEELEY



FRANK MARINO GALLERY

489 BROOME ST., N.Y.C. 10013

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is as if without Freud the center of Thomas's fiction cannot hold; the one feeling *Ararat* does evoke is the dizziness at the end of the widening gyre, or, to return to Thomas's biblical imagery, the nausea in the whorl of the deluge. *Ararat*'s weariness is that of someone beckoning to the Apocalypse to come and relieve him of the burden of his tangled life. As Surkov (the first) moans: "And it is true that I burn up women as a marathon runner burns up his flesh. How many had I had? Three hundred? Three thousand? I needed the coming Revolution to cleanse my spirit. I needed to confess."

Freud is a major character in Anthony Burgess's new novel, *The End of the World News*. In the foreword, Burgess, in the guise of his own literary executor, explains how this work, described as his first posthumous publication, came into being. The inspiration was a schoolgirl's letter asking the author what he thought the three greatest events of the past century had been. His reply: Freud's discovery of the unconscious, Trotsky's doctrine of world socialism, and the invention of the space rocket. The form of the novel was suggested by a photograph of President Carter sitting in the kitchen late at night watching three television screens at once. So in *The End of the World News* we have three different stories randomly shuffled together: a docudrama on the life of Freud, the libretto to a musical comedy entitled "Trotsky in New York," and a science-fiction story something on the order of *When Worlds Collide*.

One can understand why Burgess would want to start bringing out his posthumous works early. He's a one-man publishing conglomerate: at the rate he writes he must have to dig through manuscripts in the morning just to find his shoes. There is nothing wrong with being prolific, but in Burgess's case it causes an inflation somewhat analagous to what happens when the government prints a lot of paper money that isn't backed up by goods—the goods in this case being ideas. A certain devaluation of the currency, in real terms, is unavoidable.

Burgess, who composes music when not running off novels, may have a third career going for him writing for television. His Freud story perfectly captures the flavor of those Masterpiece Theater talking-history plays. Here we find Freud and Frau Breuer in a Vienna cafe:

> "But my work's convinced me that more brain space and living time are filled up with sex than the world's ready to admit. Guilt about sex. Taboos about sex. Thinking and dreaming and brooding about sex sex sex—"
>
> "People are looking at us, Sigmund."

The rest of the time Burgess seems content just to retell all the old Freud stories: Freud discovers the Oedipal complex, Freud faints in a meeting with Jung, Freud's disciples defect, Ferenczi cuddles his patients, Jung sleeps with his.

The musical about Trotsky's visit to New York in 1917 is even slighter. Burgess reels off pages and pages of witless lyrics. In the end, as Trotsky exits to go back to Russia and join the Revolution, a Mexican with a guitar appears from nowhere and sings:

> Mexico, Mexico,
> A good place to die
> Is Mexico,
> Under a harsh blue sky
> Where the condors fly.
> Mexico, Mexico,
> An excellent place to die,
> Come some day and try,
> Mexico.

Possibly music would help. The science-fiction plot is a standard on late-night television. A rogue planet, Lynx, is hurling toward earth; a select group of scientists have only a short time to build a spaceship—often referred to as the ark—to save some remnant of humanity (themselves) from annihilation. Burgess may think he is parodying "sub-literary" or "pseudo-literary" genres, but then the parody is so deadpan as to be unrecognizable. Even with the fre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quent cross-cutting between plots, the novel soon becomes tedious. One quickly grows impatient for Armageddon.

Russell Hoban is turning into a master of the apocalyptic imagination. His previous novel, *Riddley Walker,* was like an anthropology of life after the nuclear holocaust. His recent novel, *Pilgermann,* is in a sense a search for the New Jerusalem, the world made over and new after the Apocalypse. Hoban's mystical streak, which was apparent in *Riddley Walker,* has come even more to the fore in his latest. *Pilgermann* is less a novel than an extended series of meditations on God and philosophical speculations on the nature of good and evil, the inevitability of sin and the less sure promise of redemption. History and the essence of time are also brought into question. Hoban draws on the mystical traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to create an eccentric, often fascinating, and sometimes frustrating vision of his own.

Pilgermann, the narrator, now exists across time, or out of time, but in 1096 by the Christian calendar (4856 by the Jewish calendar) he was a Jew in what is now Germany, walking home on the morning of the Ninth of Av "fresh from the attainment of Wisdom." Wisdom, in the person of Sophia, the tax-collector's wife (Sophia means wisdom), had been attained the night before while her husband was away. Obsessed with the idea of his wife sleeping with Jews, the tax-collector had gone off to gather peasants and organize a pogrom. That morning Pilgermann is attacked by a mob, who cut off his genitals and feed them to a sow who "smells out Jews." Left bleeding by the roadside, he calls out to God "for the sake of thy covenant." He gets Christ instead. Christ informs him that "God isn't a He, It's an It" and that "It's gone." "I'm the one you'll be talking to from now on," He says.

As they walk back to Pilgermann's home and see the burning synagogue and dead bodies of slaughtered Jews, Pilgermann questions the necessity of creating such a world. The only response he gets is an intolerable vision:

> Jesus incorporates me in his glance and I begin to see him in more than one way. Jesus the great dead Lion of the World and in his mouth is the live body of Christ Radiant . . . flickering his black body spectrum, flames all dancing on the live black body of him in the mouth of the great dead lion of himself. The black body opens, it is a sky of lightning, a sea of fire, mountains of ice. The sky grows tiny, contracts to one black dot, absorbs the sea of fire, the mountains of ice. The black dot opens out into the great live Lion of the World. In his mouth the tiny dead golden body of Christ. In the mouth of the tiny dead golden body of Christ is the world, the sun, the moon, the stars, the wheeling heavens of night. Far and far the thunder of his silence rolls, the lion roars, the stars shake, flicker, burn to paleness and morning.
>
> Silence. The lion is a great paper kite, blue and yellow, the paper fluttering in the morning wind. Far, far down goes the string to Jesus winding the kite. The lion-kite bursts into flame, the flame runs down the string, Jesus is on fire . . . .

Pilgermann asks if this is the Day of Reckoning and Christ replies that "Every day is the Day of Reckoning." Christ, it turns out, is something of a bully. "[T]here can be no holding by those who go my road . . . . I am the letting go," He says. Pilgermann having recently let go of so much would seem ready to follow the road.

Full of fear that Jesus will go the way of God, into faceless Itness, Pilgermann determines on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The world, he thinks, is full of "mysterious, unseen, fragile temples," and it was in these that God used to dwell among us. But these temples "are easily destroyed . . . as I had destroyed the temple of the tax-collector's privacy in his wife. How many of them still remained? How many temples between us and Christ's last day . . . ?" This time, he realizes, is unique in history—everywhere people rush to Jerusalem with the same

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHUCK
MAGISTRO

"RECENT PAINTINGS"
MAY 3—MAY 21 1983

JOHN DAVIS GALLERY
CENTRAN BUILDING, AKRON, OHIO 44308
216-434-1124

thought, to make a "place of rebirth in the place of holy sepulchre and resurrection."

The Narrator is preceded on his pilgrimage by a repentant (though still obsessed) tax-collector. A short way into the forest Pilgermann comes across the tax-collector's headless body, hanging upside down from a tree, a husband-wife team of relic gatherers (or more accurately, relic makers) having decided that his head would make a good Pontius Pilate for a local church. In the grass beneath the rotting corpse Pilgermann finds the tax-collector's wedding ring. Holding it, he feels an almost physical remembrance of Sophia and pain at the thought of the sanctity of the marriage he violated:

> This golden circlet has dropped with the maggots out of the dead gullet because the pilgrim tax-collector before his death has swallowed his wedding ring, has renewed his covenant with his wife before being murdered and robbed. What am I to do with this ring from the finger of this maggot feast that was the lawful husband of my wife of one night?

Hoban's starting point is our most basic spiritual dilemma: to live is to sin. As Pilgermann continues on his journey, he accumulates a coterie of ghostly companions who follow him like the physical manifestations of his unanswerable experience: the headless tax-collector; Udo, the relic gatherer, whom he kills in self-defense; the peasant who castrated Pilgermann and the man-eating sow (both of whom he also kills); a bear shot through with arrows by a hunter who once worshipped the bear as God; an army of children crusaders crawling on their hands and knees to Jerusalem; and death himself, Bruder Pförtner. The questions their haunting presences pose are the irreconcilable facts of his being, the unanswered questions of his existence that drive him on toward Jerusalem and reconciliation.

Pilgermann is much more powerful when asking such questions than when giving answers. Hoban is more convincing when evoking a kind of Boschian world of tortured sinful humanity before the flood than when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he tries to be Zen-like and talk about the "total Now, that moment without beginning or end in which all other moments are contained." One can sometimes get swept up with Hoban as he rides the crest of inspiration, but his waves of visionary prose almost always seem to plunk you down in the middle of a tautology: "As far as I could see, the will of God was simply that everything possible would indeed be possible. Within that limitation that choice was ours, the reckoning His. And He was in us, one couldn't get away from Him, that was the fire of it, that was the Garden of it, at the very center of every soul and contiguous with infinity." There's no arguing with this sort of thing, of course.

But this book is often compelling, and part of what makes it so is the constant tension between its desire to become a novel and a sort of centrifugal mystical force completely at odds with that desire. The novelistic vision is one of individuality and multiplicity; the mystical vision strives for absolutes, the all in one, the Alpha and Omega, the "everything and everything." The real drama of *Pilgermann* often seems to be whether or not the novelistic center will hold; whether the narrator will survive as personality, as character, or be dispersed across time as an "action of the Word."

As it turns out, Pilgermann never makes it to Jerusalem. He's kidnapped by pirates and bought by a Muslim, one Bembel Rudzuk, an Eliade-like alchemist of the soul. Together they build an immense tile pattern in the town square in order to meditate on the "point at which stillness becomes motion" and "pattern becomes consciousness." In the end, Pilgermann dies defending Antioch against the siege of Frankish crusaders.

It's a little bit disappointing from one perspective. Here he's gone through all three of the West's major religions and he's never really found the answer. But there is a magic in this novel. It exists where, narratively speaking, pattern becomes consciousness: the point at which identity coalesces, where character is created and becomes autonomous. This alchemy may be what *Pilgermann* is ultimately about. Hoban, who has in a sense internalized the Apocalypse ("I believe that the Last Day is every day," says Bembel Rudzuk), has created a novel always on the verge of destruction, and thus always on the verge of creation. It exists in a state which the narrator describes as one of constantly "becoming."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Notebook

Room on the podium?

by Samuel Lipman

Public attention is now focused at last on the weakened and precarious condition of the music directors (our current euphuism for celebrity conductors) across the entire United States.

Merely to mention the orchestras involved is to convey the magnitude of the problem. Of our six major orchestras—those of New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Los Angeles—only one orchestra is secure and comfortable in its choice of conductor, and that is Cleveland's, largely because Christoph von Dohnányi, the orchestra's new music director, has yet to begin his first season. Elsewhere the situation ranges from troubled to dismal. In Boston, Seiji Ozawa's reign, long under attack from the press, is openly threatened by the popularity of Sir Colin Davis, the orchestra's principal guest conductor. In Chicago, Sir Georg Solti, hitherto the most securely entrenched conductor in America, must contend with extensive newspaper discussion of the choice of his eventual replacement. In Los Angeles, Carlo Maria Giulini is increasingly perceived as a musician of limited repertory, somehow lacking in that "star quality" no less necessary on the West Coast than elsewhere. Even in Philadelphia, where for over half a century Eugene Ormandy seemed oblivious to everything but old age, Riccardo Muti seems (despite having just signed a new contract) to have failed to excite his musicians or to provide a new and convincing image for the orchestra.

The most strained situation is in New York. Here Zubin Mehta has in no way succeeded in exerting an influence on the city's musical life. The critics of *The New York Times,* after an early welcome to the conductor, have rarely been able to praise more than one work on any given Mehta program; except for his performances of Bruckner and Mahler, there is in fact no press enthusiasm for anything Mehta conducts. Moreover, Mehta's relations with his players are now in disarray. He has made many changes in orchestra personnel, not all of them by the relatively palatable mechanism of retirement. Stories of harsh treatment, including summary dismissal, are now frequent, and no public display of respect for the musicians —as on the recent occasion of the deaths of two of them—can assuage the worry and fear now developing in the Philharmonic.

The New York audience seems remarkably cool in its attitude toward Mehta. It is almost always possible to get a ticket to a Philharmonic concert, and, even when the tickets themselves are sold, it seems (to judge by the empty seats) that a number of buyers fail to use them. Perhaps the best (or, from the standpoint of the orchestra management, the worst) sign of Mehta's present difficulties is the Philharmonic's loss last year of its exclusive CBS recording contract, a loss which marks the end of an association of almost fifty years. Mehta's records aren't selling, and no amount of hype in the glossy media has made any difference at the cash register.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Some recent signs of an upturn in the Philharmonic's recording fortunes have only underscored Mehta's plight. In January an official of the orchestra told a group of orchestra musicians during a rehearsal break that Deutsche Grammophon, the German (and world) record industry leader, was going to make recordings of Mahler and Sibelius symphonies with the Philharmonic. Tellingly enough, the Mahler was to be conducted by the recent Philharmonic guest conductor Giuseppe Sinopoli; the Sibelius was to be in the safe hands of the orchestra's laureate conductor, Leonard Bernstein.

But to treat all these problems in terms of press, labor relations, public, and contracts is to ignore what by rights should come first in the discussion: the music and the quality of its performance. In this area, the similarities in the situations of all these great orchestras (Cleveland for the moment excluded) outweigh local differences. We are not in a great era of orchestral performance in this country; if anything, recent years have seen a decline in the musical and technical quality of the best symphony playing.

Fortunately, evidence of this decline exists in some more permanent form than the memories of subscribers. Phonograph records, even though inadequate, document what the better days were like. In the case of the New York Philharmonic, one does not need to go back to the now mythical age of Mengelberg and Toscanini. A CBS/Columbia disc of the Brahms Second Symphony conducted by Artur Rodzinski, available as recently as the 1970s, and a private-label set of Strauss's *Elektra* from a 1949 performance in Carnegie Hall conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos testify to a level of ensemble playing never reached at Lincoln Center today. From the Philadelphia Orchestra (also on CBS/Columbia) one can still find in secondhand record stores plush and soulful examples of Russian music recorded in the 1950s, including the Second Symphony and *The Bells* of Rachmaninoff. Fritz Reiner's Chicago Symphony recordings from the Fifties, of music ranging from Beethoven symphonies to the virtuoso *Navarra* of Albéniz, are now heard as classics of the phonograph. Similarly, the Cleveland Orchestra's recordings of Beethoven and Mahler, under the direction of George Szell, demonstrate why the Cleveland Orchestra was the best orchestra in the world just twenty years ago. Little evidence of Koussevitsky's work with the Boston Symphony is available today; a recent Vox/Turnabout re-release of Arthur Foote's *Suite* (opus 63) and Grieg's *Elegiac Melody* (opus 34, no. 2) reminds us of what aching beauty can be produced by a great string section under a great conductor.

On all these records we hear orchestras that manage, each in its own way, refinement without loss of character, bite without roughness, and unanimity of attack without heaviness and rigidity. And here are conductors who achieve, each in his own style, sentiment without sentimentality and musical personality without eccentricity. The result of it all is real musical interest.

These great conductors were deeply committed to their orchestras. Indeed, wherever they had a permanent job, they ruled the artistic roost. But now, when we survey the American musical scene, we find that the music directors of our greatest orchestras are little more than absentee landlords—if they can be said to be landlords (in a metaphorical sense) at all. Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, and Seiji Ozawa each conduct less than half of their orchestra's concerts. Carlo Maria Giulini conducts about eight weeks during the regular season in Los Angeles, and Georg Solti about the same in Chicago. The rest of the year is taken over by guests, associates, and assistants. Some of them are good, many of them are mediocre; none has responsibility for the orchestra or the musical life of the community.

This problem of American orchestras has been noticed before. As long ago as 1936, the composer Douglas Moore (whose opera, *The Ballad of Baby Doe,* remains the high water mark of our national folk opera) wrote an article in *The American Scholar* on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MORTON LIVINGSTON SCHAMBERG

Figure C (Geometrical Patterns), 1914. Oil on canvas, 28 x 16 inches

The artist's estate is represented by

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc.

22 East 80 Street New York, NY 10021 Telephone: (212) 879-6606

Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 to 5:30

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the problem of finding a suitable replacement for Toscanini at the New York Philharmonic. In his essay— "Imported Virtuosos for American Music?"—Moore made several points that are relevant to our present predicament.

After paying every honor to Toscanini, Moore turned to the shortcomings of even this great man in his American context:

> In one significant respect, however, Toscanini has evidenced the limitations of the virtuoso. Aside from his service in selecting and training the personnel of the orchestra he has shown no interest in exercising his musical leadership in the community. He has scarcely seemed to notice the existence of a musical life in the city. He usually arrives from Europe the day before his first rehearsal and departs at midnight after his last concert. While here he participates in no way in the musical life of the community outside of his concerts . . . . He has been the supreme musical authority in the Philharmonic Orchestra but the powers which he should exercise, the responsibility which he would be expected to assume, have gone by default to the management and the board of directors.

And now? Although today's music directors (themselves hardly Toscaninis) often spend their time in the communities where they conduct living in the houses they own rather than in hotels, they all ceaselessly travel the world, conducting other orchestras at will and sometimes holding the music directorships of other institutions. Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Georg Solti, and Carlo Maria Giulini all conduct more outside their American home bases than they do within them; Zubin Mehta finds time to be the conductor of the Israel Philharmonic. Their influence on local musical life here remains practically nil.

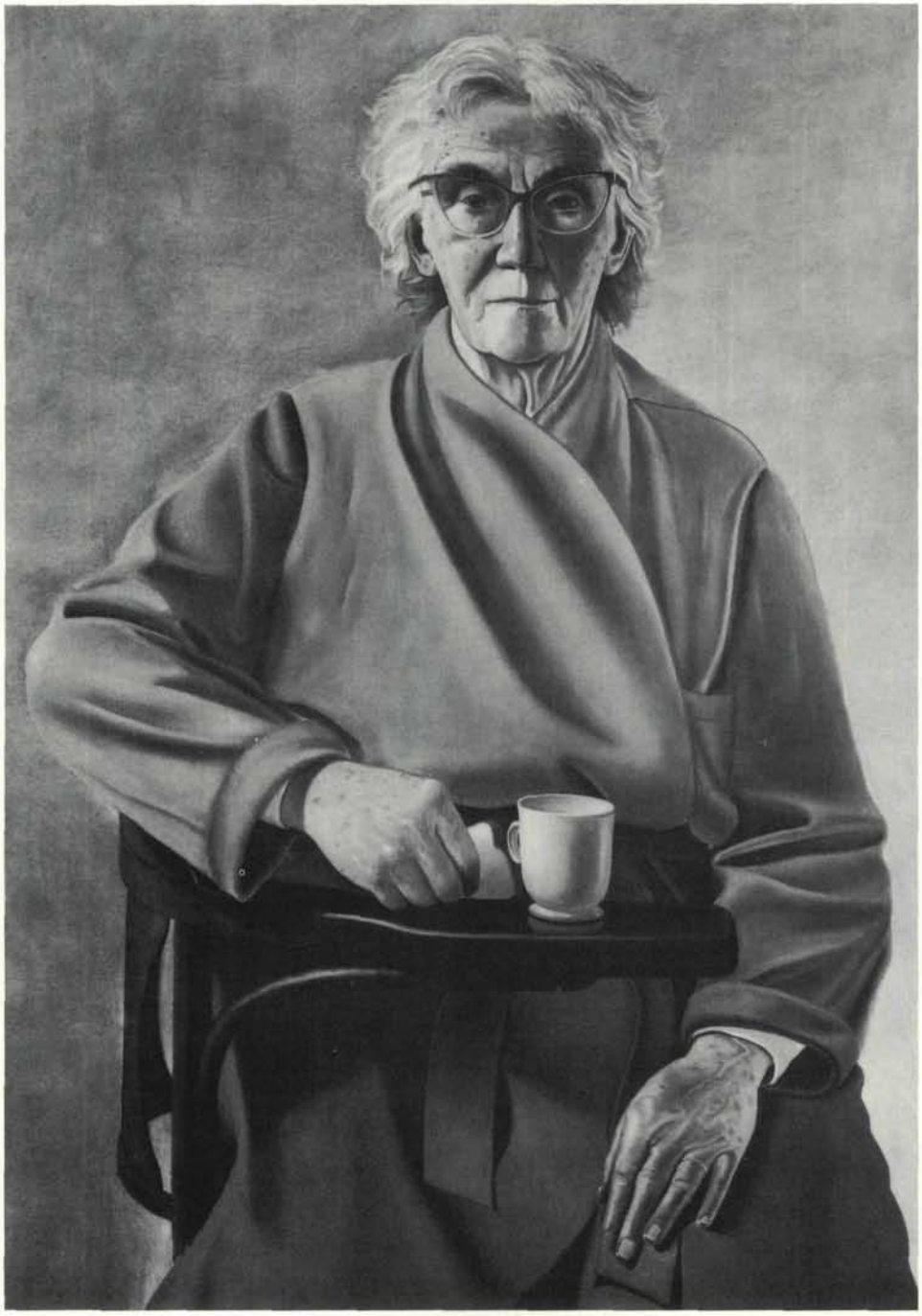
Moore's remark about the responsibility of leadership having passed to management and boards is now spectacularly true. Of this nonmusical pair, today it is management—or, to use the current term, the administrators—who run the show. For them, organized as they are in close alliance with their colleagues at other orchestras, musical life is a public philanthropy to be hawked to every possible corporate, private, and public purse. The particular tool of administrators in this selling job is, of course, glamour: foreign names and career images sell tickets, raise money, and satisfy egos all the way round. American orchestral life resembles nothing so much as a fifty-two-week combination of charity balls for the rich and wine and cheese parties for the middle classes.

As is always true with houses of cards, this one has seemed solid—until now. But poorer performances combined with escalating costs (not least of which are the astronomical salaries paid to star conductors) are threatening to bring everything down. Perhaps now is the moment to think of art and not box office, of music and not glamour. Perhaps now we may begin to think—as Douglas Moore did forty-seven years ago—of rooting musical activity in particular civic environments. Perhaps now we can attempt to choose musical leaders who will give their full musical lives to the communities that employ them.

This may even mean (perish the thought) employing American music directors for at least some of our great orchestras. I can at this moment think of at least four Americans who richly deserve this chance. They are Leonard Slatkin, Gerard Schwarz, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Jorge Mester. Not only do these talents deserve such important opportunities, but we too will benefit. For if we will begin to entrust our own musicians with major responsibilities, perhaps they may provide our musical atmosphere with the kind of interest and distinction which comes from dedication and time spent on the task. Will the audience come? To paraphrase Gertrude Stein about Ezra Pound, if the music's good, they'll come. If not, not. It is a mistake to ask for more.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LESLIE: "BREAD AND COFFEE", 1983, O/C, 84 X 60 INCHES



Alfred Leslie

ALLAN FRUMKIN GALLERY 50 WEST 57TH NEW YORK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

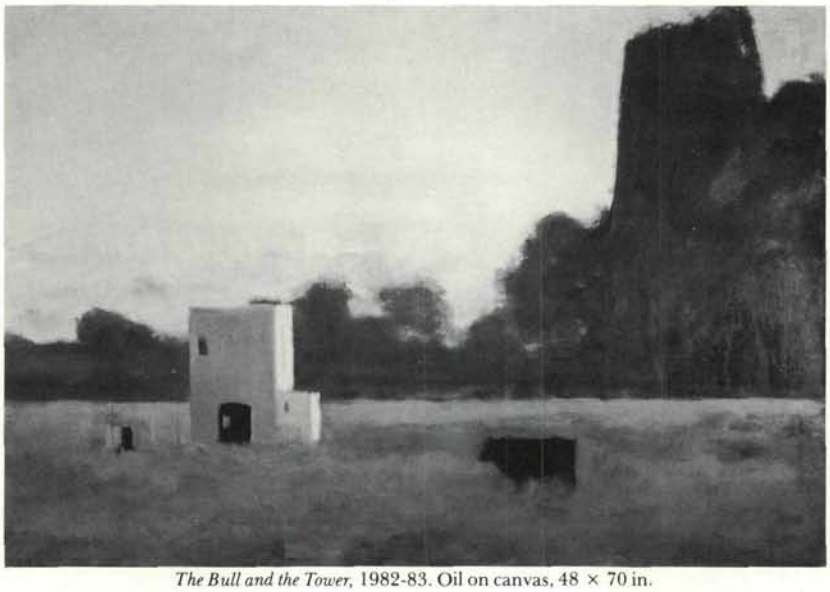
"Escape" and "Lusting"
RICHARD RAPPAPORT PHOTOGRAPHED
BY JIM NIGHTLINGER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

P A U L R E S I K A

Recent Paintings / April 13-May 14



The Bull and the Tower, 1982-83. Oil on canvas, 48 × 70 in.

1014 Madison (78 St.) 3rd Fl. GRAHAM New York 10021 · 535-5767

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

TATISTCHEFF

LINCOLN PERRY. From "The Necessities of Life", 1982.
Oil on canvas, 36" x 60". (One of three panels.)

TATISTCHEFF

38 EAST 57 STREET • NEW YORK 10022 • (212) 888-1599

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"BYE-BYE SERIES III," MIXED MEDIA ON DROP CLOTH, 105" X 103," 1982

DUSTON SPEAR

APRIL 1-26

KATHLEEN MEYER GALLERY

624 WEST MAIN STREET, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40202

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bill Jensen, *The Tempest*, 1981, charcoal, pastel on paper, 30¾ x 23 in.

WASHBURN GALLERY 42 EAST 57 & 113 GREENE NEW YORK

The New Criterion
850 Seventh Avenue
Suite 503
New York NY 10019

DMATHSW338M24ZA 022984
MR. WILLIAM MATHESON
338 M ST., S.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20024

Bulk Catalog Rate
U.S. Postage Paid at
North Branford, CT
Permit No. 8

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED